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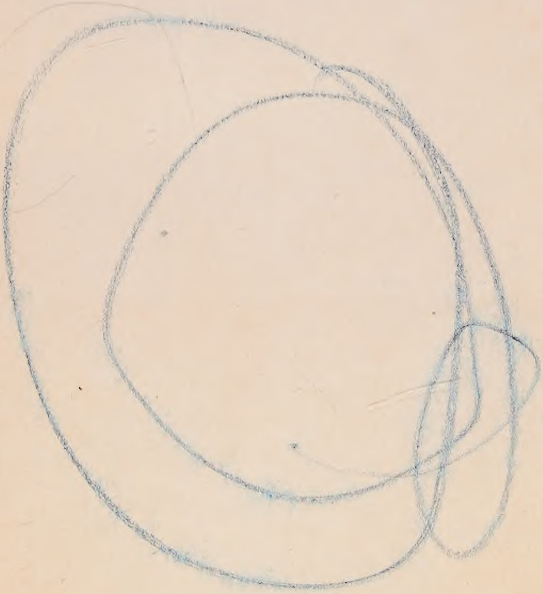

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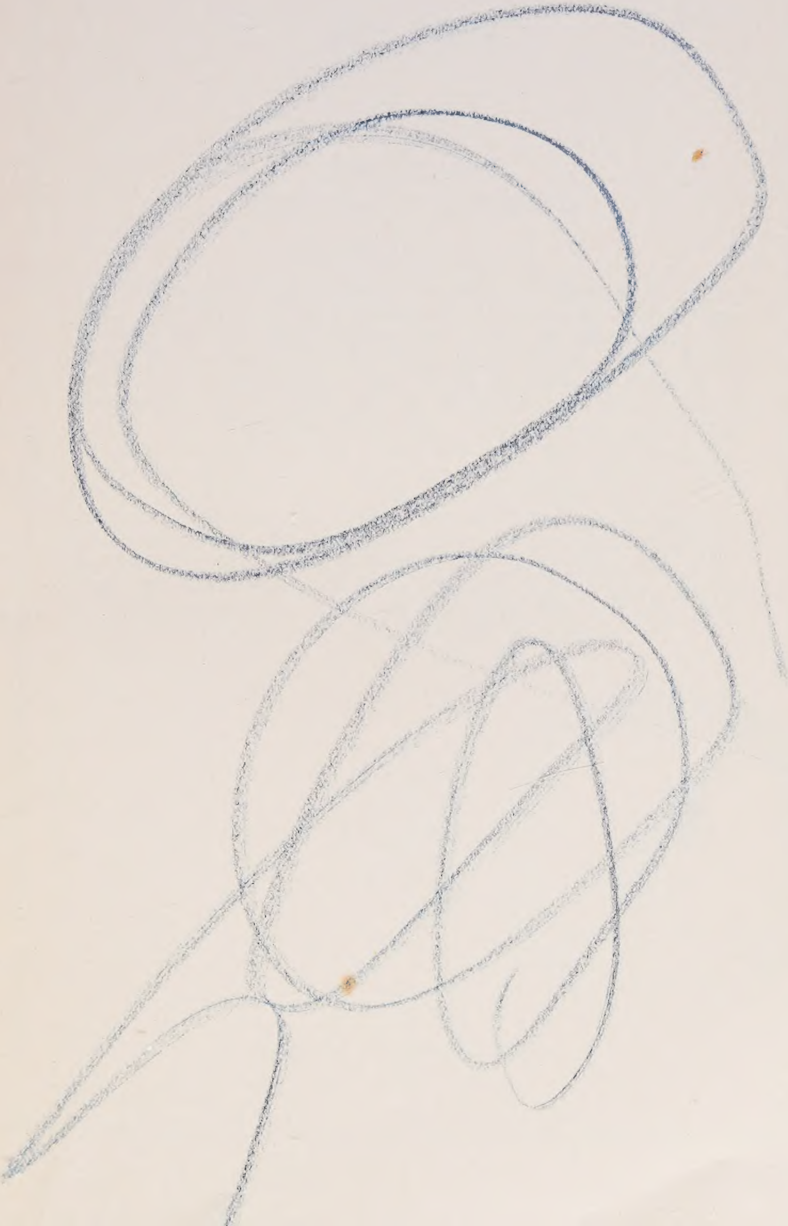

The
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for 1931

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ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE SERMONS.

The high value of good illustrations in a sermon is just about universally acknowledged. Audiences certainly appreciate them. Illustrations help the people to see; but "where there is no vision, the people perish."

The very fact that the preacher is to be above all things a teacher (Matt. 28, 20) proves the importance and necessity of illustrating. Who can teach without illustrating? Who could teach arithmetic or algebra without examples which illustrate the rules? Who could teach grammar without giving illustrations? For the young a book of instruction without illustrations is just about useless. A sermon without illustrations is something like a geography without maps.

What has been said is confirmed by the practise of all great preachers. Far above all the Teacher of all teachers, the Master and Chief Bishop, from whom all preachers are to learn, stands the Lord Jesus. The discourses of Jesus teem with illustrations. When we read what the evangelists report of His sayings, images flood the mind; one follows the other. There we see a house built upon a rock, another built upon sand; one is garnished and swept, a temple of the Holy Spirit, another is the dwelling of evil spirits. We see masters and servants, men saluting one another in the market-place, little children at their father's knee, the hiring of laborers, the work in the vineyard, the feasting at the banquet, the virgins meeting the bridegroom, the closed door, the lit candle, the tares in the wheat-field, the appealing widow, the scheming debtor, the wasteful profligate, the strait gate, the broad way, the ass fallen into a pit, fish, serpents, and many more, too many to mention. In a measure the same can be said of all the inspired writers of Holy Writ. The Levitical ceremonies are all pictures and shadows of spiritual things. The psalms unfold to us visions and spiritual dreams of shields, trees, kings upon thrones, battles, hills, valleys, streams, wild beasts, vineyards, beautiful temples, lions, bulls, skies, fields, plants — everything there is alive and can be seen by the eye of faith. Proverbs picture to us the child, the parent, the rod, the froward woman, rubies, gold, paths, gates, couches, honeycombs, swords — and no end. We could not begin to picture the images of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets. The same is true of the writings of St. Paul. In short, the whole Bible is a picture-book crowded with images. Everything is portrayed in pictures and illustrated by narrative.

And to this day, whether we listen to, or read, the sermons of outstanding preachers, we shall find that the power to have the audience visualize what they are saying is one of the outstanding gifts which these men possessed and exercised. Their sermons were not abstract reasonings, but word-pictures. Certainly they spoke general truths, but such statements were preceded or followed by the very image of what they were teaching. St. Paul states a general truth in abstract terms when he says: "We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law"; but before he makes this statement, he paints the corruption of the Jews and Gentiles alike. And after he has made this statement, he narrates the histories of Abraham and David to support what he has taught in the abstract. Jesus also uses brief terms in the abstract, *e. g.*, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel," but in the 15th chapter of Luke we have parable after parable picturing to us what the Gospel means.

True, the art of illustration in itself alone will not suffice. Indeed, no one thing alone makes a great sermon. But it is one of the arts to which every minister must pay attention. The ordinary man has difficulty in following a discourse of abstract argumentation. To him most of this is tedious and seems prolix; but tell him that, if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch, and he will grasp your meaning at once.

Why, then, have we not more of it? Why so little of it in sermons that are otherwise good? One reason at least is this, that the art of illustration, however desirable and useful it may be, is difficult to practise with skill. Constantly to have new and striking illustrations is no easy matter. Many ministers have heard such ridiculous and bungling pieces of illustration that they conceived a horror of such a thing and therefore avoid it or practise it in great moderation. The abuse of illustration has filled them with disgust. But let them remember that we have the same difficulty here that we have with any other art in preaching. Polemics, rightly employed, has added power to many a sermon. But, again, by polemics many ministers have made themselves impossible. In the addresses of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul polemics occupy no mean place. Their bitter denunciations against false prophets are too well known to require quotations. And what would Luther have been without polemics? And yet polemics has been the rock upon which many a preacher's vessel foundered.

Just so, quoting appropriate verse when the preacher has reached his climax makes the truth all the more impressive. But many who have stumbled once or twice in trying to repeat impressive verse have grown timid and restrict themselves to a few stanzas which they know as well as they know the Lord's Prayer. These things require skill and ability and mean hard and persistent work.

In like manner, illustrations in the sermon are not a short cut to success. If they are to be of real value, they must be *of a piece with the entire sermon,* not culled from some book of illustrations and artificially attached to this or that part of the discourse. Indeed, the entire sermon is not to be a hotchpotch of heterogeneous conglomeration, but one complete, living whole. And the very delivery of it is also to be of a piece with the content and the wording.

But let us get back to illustrations. It is not our intention to give a *résumé* of that with which any rhetoric may supply you, the figures of speech, the onomatopoeia of words, the parallelism existing between spiritual and material processes. There are those to whom picture-speaking is just as natural as their mother tongue; but God's natural gifts should receive attention and should be developed, not neglected, 1 Tim. 4, 13—15.

A few observations and warnings may be in place. The old Latin proverb reminds us of one danger: *Duo quum faciunt idem, non est idem.* We all imitate, but beware of how you imitate, beware of how you use the illustrations of others! A story may sound well from the lips of one and yet make an unpleasant impression when spoken by another. Moreover, after an illustration has been heard again and again, it may produce contempt. The very men also who are most pungent and idiosyncratic generally defy imitation. Many is the preacher who has made himself ridiculous by attempting to do what he saw in another.

The preacher must also keep in mind that he is an ambassador of God, speaking as though God did through him beseech men, 2 Cor. 5, 20. Therefore jesting and irreverent speech is out of place. The preacher is not an entertainer.

Nor should any illustration be used for its own sake. It is not necessary that the hearers *enjoy* the sermon. God wants them to be benefited through it; they are to be taught. The illustration is not to be used that it may entertain, but that it may make clear, vivid, and impressive what is to be taught.

But what are the sources of the best illustrations? The following three books supply the best that can be found: —

First, the Bible. Of this source of illustrations Professor Pattison writes: "Not alone his reverence for the Book as a divine revelation, but also his appreciation of its worth for this special purpose will lead the preacher to put the Bible first. The same volume which gives him his text will also furnish him with his clearest statements of doctrine, his most convincing arguments, and his most effective illustrations. How well the Puritans knew this their sermons, studded with Scripture names, incidents, and allusions, testify. 'No illustrations,' says Spurgeon, 'are so good as those from Scripture.' Its biographies and histories, its types and ordinances, its felicities of thought and language, have all of them this in their favor, that they are already familiar in our mouths as household words. 'Woven for three centuries into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history,' the Bible in our version has a record almost as extended and quite as illustrious in America. The ear of the congregation welcomes any allusion to the Book which has 'taken such a hold of the world as no other.' Where Washington Irving wakened many a sleeping fancy, as he gratefully acknowledged in his old age, our hearers will find their minds quickened as well. We counsel that, so far as it is possible to do so, you draw the illustrations for your sermon in the first instance from the text. In preaching, for example, from Is. 40, 6—8 ('The voice said, Cry,' etc.), the hillsides and villages of Palestine will enrich your sermons with material. Paul's words in 2 Cor. 3, 18 will suggest a group of images drawn from the phrase 'beholding as in a glass.' A whole sermon lies in the etymology of the Greek word translated 'clothed upon' in 1 Pet. 5, 5—7." *

Nothing will so bountifully repay the preacher for work devoted to it as the study of the Bible. If he is familiar with its images, its narratives, and its references, its symbols and its types, he will ever have new and impressive illustrations for what he wishes to say, illustrations that peculiarly fit the pulpit and carry with them divine authority.

The second book of God which the preacher should use is the book of nature. And included in this are the occurrences of daily life. Certainly, taste must be observed in all references to these. By occurrences of daily life we mean those things which occur and reoccur daily in the life of nearly every one of us.

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* Pattison, *The Making of the Sermon*, pp. 273. 274.

The third book is that of history, both of the Church and of the world. And included in this is current history as reported by the press. That one must observe proper decorum, care, and exercise judgment in the selection need scarcely be repeated.

However, just as the young preacher studies the sermons of masters and notices in them this or that excellency, so he may also study them for their art of illustration. Nor would I forbid any one to have on hand books of illustrations. Among these I may mention *Historical Lights,* by C. E. Little, published by Funk and Wagnalls Co.; *Cyclopedia of Religious Anecdotes,* by Lawson; *Modern Cyclopedia of Illustrations,* by Hallock, published by Fleming H. Revell Co.; *Anecdotes, Illustrations, Incidents,* by D. L. Moody, published by Fleming H. Revell Co.; Caspari's *Geistliches und Weltliches.* But such books are to be used with fine discrimination. These anecdotes and stories have been told and retold and may be well known to our audiences. Many of them smack of the sensational, others ring improbable. However, they may serve the purpose of suggesting other illustrations, or they may vivify an idea in the minister's mind, and that in itself is worth something. To see how another has done what we wish to do will help the intelligent preacher to do better.

The practise of many ministers of relating incidents from their own experience is not to be recommended. The preacher may thus betray confidences. We have heard some preacher relate so many personal experiences in one sermon that it was difficult to believe that one person could have so many interesting incidents happen to him in a whole lifetime. By speaking of our own travels, experiences, activities, we may also put ourselves too much to the fore.

We must also warn the minister against overdoing illustration. *Ne quid nimis* is in place also here. Of one minister we heard that he had an anecdote for every point in his sermon.

Vary your illustrations. A fitting quotation, a telling figure of speech, a stanza from the hymn-book, an incident of history, a quotation from the Bible, and here and there a narrative that is well chosen and pointed, — but not anecdote after anecdote.

And now in conclusion, study your Bible, learn it better and better. We repeat: Nothing, absolutely nothing, will yield richer returns.

An orderly and Bible-filled sermon, delivered by a living witness of Christ as an ambassador of God, shall not be in vain, but its message shall prosper in the thing whereto it was sent.

MARTIN S. SOMMER.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES.

Outlines on the First Series of Gospel-Lessons

Adopted by the Synodical Conference.

PAGE
First Sunday in Advent. Matt. 11, 25—30 3
Second Sunday in Advent. Luke 17, 26—30 6
Third Sunday in Advent. Matt. 3, 1—6 9
Fourth Sunday in Advent. Mark 6, 17—29 13
Sunday after Christmas. Luke 2, 25—32 17
Sunday after New Year. Matt. 9, 9—13 21
First Sunday after Epiphany. John 6, 28—40 24
Second Sunday after Epiphany. Matt. 12, 46—50 28
Third Sunday after Epiphany. Luke 4, 38—44 32
Septuagesima. Matt. 5, 17—19 36
Sexagesima. John 8, 25—36 38
Quinquagesima. Matt. 20, 17—28 40
First Sunday in Lent, Invocavit. Luke 4, 1—15 42
Second Sunday in Lent, Reminiscere. John 12, 20—26 46
Third Sunday in Lent, Oculi. John 2, 13—25 48
Fourth Sunday in Lent, Laetare. John 11, 46—57 51
Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica. John 12, 27—36 55
Palm Sunday (Confirmation). John 3, 22—36 59
Easter Sunday. Luke 24, 1—12 62
First Sunday after Easter, Quasimodogeniti. Matt. 12, 38—42 65
Second Sunday after Easter, Misericordias Domini. John 10, 1—11 68
Third Sunday after Easter, Jubilate. Mark 2, 18—20 71
Fourth Sunday after Easter, Cantate. John 5, 19—29 73
Fifth Sunday after Easter, Rogate. Luke 18, 1—8 76
Sixth Sunday after Easter, Exaudi. John 8, 12—20 79
Pentecost Sunday. John 14, 15—21 82
Trinity Sunday. Matt. 3, 13—17 85
First Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 19, 16—26 90
Second Sunday after Trinity. John 8, 1—11 92
Third Sunday after Trinity. Luke 15, 11—32 95
Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 7, 1—6 99
Fifth Sunday after Trinity. John 1, 43—51 102
Sixth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 18, 1—14 107
Seventh Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 18, 15—22 109
Eighth Sunday after Trinity. John 7, 14—24 112
Ninth Sunday after Trinity. Mark 12, 38—44 116
Tenth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 21, 33—46 119
Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. Mark 2, 13—17 122
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 9, 27—34 125
Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. John 7, 25—31 129
Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity. Luke 7, 36—50 134
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity. John 14, 1—14 139

PAGE
Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 22, 23—33 144
Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity. Luke 13, 10—17 147
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 5, 1—12 150
Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 10, 40—42 155
Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Luke 6, 43—49 160
Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity. Mark 10, 46—52 162
Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity. Luke 14, 25—35 166
Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 17, 24—27 171
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity. Mark 8, 34—38 176
Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity. Matt. 13, 44—52 181

CONFESSIONAL ADDRESSES.

Confessional Address on Ps. 23, 5 187
Confessional Address on Ps. 51, 10 188
Confessional Address on Ps. 103, 5 191
Confessional Address on Ps. 119, 32 193
Confessional Address on Luke 5, 31. 32 196
Confessional Address on Luke 22, 19. 20 199
Confessional Address on Heb. 13, 9 201

MID-WEEK SERVICES.

First Advent Outline. Gen. 49, 8—12 207
Second Advent Outline. Num. 24, 17 212
Third Advent Outline. Is. 11, 1—10 214
Christmas Eve. Is. 9, 6 218
Christmas Day. Matt. 1, 18—25 221
New Year's Eve. Gen. 47, 8 225
New Year's Day. Luke 13, 1—9 230
Epiphany. Luke 4, 16—21 236
First Lenten Outline. Matt. 26, 57—66 241
Second Lenten Outline. Luke 23, 1—3 245
Third Lenten Outline. Luke 23, 13—15 248
Fourth Lenten Outline. Matt. 27, 15—22 251
Fifth Lenten Outline. Matt. 27, 24—26 255
Sixth Lenten Outline. Luke 23, 33 a 257
Maundy Thursday. Matt. 26, 17—30 260
Good Friday. Luke 23, 39—53 264
Ascension Day. Luke 24, 50—53 267
Michaelmas. Heb. 1, 14 272
Reformation Festival. Ps. 103, 2 277
Thanksgiving Day. 1 Sam. 12, 23. 24 281

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES.

Five Great Doctrines.

The Word of God. 1 Pet. 1, 23 289
The Image of God in Man. Gen. 1, 26. 27 292
The Providence of God. Acts 17, 27 c. 28 295
Sanctification. Eph. 2, 10 297
The Resurrection of the Body. John 5, 28. 29 301

Five Impressive Words of Paul.

PAGE
"What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?" Acts 9, 6 305
"God Commandeth All Men Everywhere to Repent." Acts 17, 22—31 .. 310
"Testifying Repentance toward God and Faith toward Our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20, 20. 21 315
"I Commend You to God and the Word of His Grace." Acts 20, 32 ... 318
"A Conscience Void of Offense toward God and toward Men." Acts 24, 16 323

Christian Stewardship.

What Is This Stewardship? 1 Pet. 4, 10 328
Faithfulness in Stewardship. 1 Cor. 4, 2 332
The Joy of Stewardship. Ps. 100, 2 335

Five Men of the Bible.

Enoch. Gen. 5, 24 339
Ham. Gen. 9, 20—25 343
Ishmael. Gen. 21, 9—20 346
Jacob. Gen. 32, 10 a 349
Joshua. Josh. 1, 6—9 352

Five Women of the Bible.

Eve. Gen. 3, 1—7 355
Jochebed. Ex. 2, 9 363
Jezebel. Gal. 6, 7. 8 366
The Shunammite. 2 Kings 4, 8—13 370
Lydia. Acts 16, 11—15. 40 373

Five Incidents of the Old Testament.

Friendship. 1 Sam. 18, 1—4 377
Ahithophel, the Flat Failure, or the Man of Wrong Ideals. 2 Sam. 17, 23 381
The Little Hebrew Maid. 2 Kings 5, 1. 2 384
The Boys of Bethel. 2 Kings 2, 23—25 387
The Conversion of Manasseh. 2 Chron. 33, 10—13 389

Great Hymns.

All Glory Be to God on High. Luke 2, 14 394
Out of the Depths. Ps. 130 396
Commit Whatever Grieves Thee. Ps. 37, 5 398
One Thing's Needful. Luke 10, 38—42 401
Jesus, Lover of My Soul. Ps. 73, 25. 26 407
From Greenland's Icy Mountains. 2 Kings 7, 9 413
Abide with Me. Luke 24, 28. 29 419
O Bleeding Head and Wounded. Matt. 27, 29—31 424

The Christian Home.

The Founding of the Christian Home. Col. 3, 17 430
The Proper Relation between Husband and Wife. Eph. 5, 22—33 ... 432
The Proper Relation between Parents and Children. Eph. 6, 1—4 ... 436
The Preservation of the Christian Home. Ps. 128 438
The Christian Home an Image of Our Eternal Home in Heaven. John 14, 2 441

SPECIAL SERVICES.

PAGE
Outline for a Funeral Sermon. Ps. 71, 19—23 447
Outline for Wedding Address. Ps. 37, 5 448
Introductory Sermon. Eph. 6, 18. 19 449
Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Ordination. Phil. 2, 29 452
Church Anniversary. Mark 4, 30—32. 457
The Christian Education of Children. Ps. 78, 5—7 461
Mission-work. Matt. 9, 35—38 466
Outline for a Sermon after Attending District Synodical Meeting. Neh. 4, 6 470
Reunion of Former Catechumens. 2 Kings 4, 26 472
Walther League Service. Josh. 3, 5 476
Anniversary of Ladies' Aid Society. Luke 8, 3 479
Address at the Graduation of Nurses 483
Mother's Day. Prov. 14, 1 487

Index of Scripture-Texts Treated.

PAGE

Gen. 1, 26. 27 ... 292
3, 1—7 ... 355
5, 24 ... 339
9, 20—25 ... 343
21, 9—20 ... 346
32, 10 a ... 349
47, 8 ... 225
49, 8—12 ... 207
Ex. 2, 9 ... 363
Num. 24, 17 ... 212
Josh. 1, 6—9 ... 352
3, 5 ... 476
1 Sam. 12, 23. 24 ... 281
18, 1—4 ... 377
2 Sam. 17, 23 ... 381
2 Kings 2, 23—25 ... 387
4, 8—13 ... 370
4, 26 ... 472
5, 1. 2 ... 384
7, 9 ... 413
2 Chron. 33, 10—13 ... 389
Neh. 4, 6 ... 470
Ps. 23, 5 ... 187
37, 5 ... 398. 448
51, 10 ... 188
71, 19—23 ... 447
73, 25. 26 ... 407
78, 5—7 ... 461
100, 2 ... 335
103, 2 ... 277
103, 5 ... 191
119, 32 ... 193
128 ... 438
130 ... 396
Prov. 14, 1 ... 487
Is. 9, 6 ... 218
11, 1—10 ... 214
Matt. 1, 18—25 ... 221
3, 1—6 ... 9
3, 13—17 ... 85
5, 1—12 ... 150
5, 17—19 ... 36
7, 1—6 ... 99
9, 9—13 ... 21
9, 27—34 ... 125

PAGE

Matt. 9, 35—38 ... 466
10, 40—42 ... 155
11, 25—30 ... 3
12, 38—42 ... 65
12, 46—50 ... 28
13, 44—52 ... 181
17, 24—27 ... 171
18, 1—14 ... 107
18, 15—22 ... 109
19, 16—26 ... 90
20, 17—28 ... 40
21, 33—46 ... 119
22, 23—33 ... 144
26, 17—30 ... 260
26, 57—66 ... 241
27, 15—22 ... 251
27, 24—26 ... 255
27, 29—31 ... 424
Mark 2, 13—17 ... 122
2, 18—20 ... 71
4, 30—32 ... 457
6, 17—29 ... 13
8, 34—38 ... 176
10, 46—52 ... 162
12, 38—44 ... 116
Luke 2, 14 ... 394
2, 25—32 ... 17
4, 1—15 ... 42
4, 16—21 ... 236
4, 38—44 ... 32
5, 31. 32 ... 196
6, 43—49 ... 160
7, 36—50 ... 134
8, 3 ... 479
10, 38—42 ... 401
13, 1—9 ... 230
13, 10—17 ... 147
14, 25—35 ... 166
15, 1—32 ... 95
17, 26—30 ... 6
18, 1—8 ... 76
22, 19. 20 ... 199
23, 1—3 ... 245
23, 13—15 ... 248
23, 33 a ... 257

PAGE
Luke 23, 39—53 264
24, 1—12 62
24, 28. 29 419
24, 50—53 267
John 1, 43—51 102
2, 13—25 48
3, 22—36 59
5, 19—29 73
5, 28. 29 301
6, 28—40 24
7, 14—24 112
7, 25—31 129
8, 1—11 92
8, 12—20 79
8, 25—36 38
10, 1—11 68
11, 46—57 51
12, 20—26 46
12, 27—36 55
14, 1—14 139
14, 2 441

PAGE
John 14, 15—21 82
Acts 9, 6 305
16, 11—15. 40 373
17, 27 c. 28 295
17, 22—31 310
20, 20. 21 315
20, 32 318
24, 16 323
1 Cor. 4, 2 332
Gal. 6, 7. 8 366
Eph. 2, 10 297
5, 22—33 432
6, 1—4 436
6, 18. 19 449
Phil. 2, 29 452
Col. 3, 17 430
1 Pet. 1, 23 289
4, 10 328
Heb. 1, 14 272
13, 9 201

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES.

OUTLINES ON THE FIRST SERIES OF GOSPEL-LESSONS

Adopted by the Synodical Conference.

First Sunday in Advent.

Matt. 11, 25—30.

To-day is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of another year of grace. Again it is spring-time in the kingdom of God. Beautiful and skilful is the arrangement in the Church with regard to her services and seasons. Beginning with Advent, as the forerunner and herald, it is followed by Christmas, the festival of the Nativity, then by Epiphany, Lent, Eastertide, Trinity, each in turn presenting to us, in constant review, the facts and events, the doings and sayings, of our blessed Lord and setting before us the doctrines and duties of our holy religion. Forcibly and touchingly, too, does each speak a language distinctly its own. How the hymns and prayers and texts of Advent, which means coming, breathe the sentiment of expectancy, of anxiously looking forward to Him who was to come, and Christmas that of joy over Him who has come. — Again we have Lent, with its deep solemnity; Good Friday with its gloom; Easter with its triumphant hope; Trinity with its calm teaching and appeals. Truly, like a wise and provident mother, the Church has adapted herself to the wants and welfare, the instruction and spiritual uplift, of her children. Mark this as we again set out to journey with her through another twelvemonth of incoming knowledge and grace. And so let us devoutly attend to the text in accord with the sentiment of this Sunday — to extend a hearty reception to Him who is the Church's Hope and Center and Solace.

The Gracious Invitation of Advent.

1.

Who invites? This is most important. The divine majesty of the Speaker, vv. 25—27. In the bosom of the eternal Father lay the eternal and only-begotten Son, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the express image of His substance; even that Word which was in the beginning with God and which was God. He it was who was appointed in the counsels and decrees of eternity to become the Revealer of the eternal Godhead in all things pertaining to our enlightenment and salvation. And thus, while "no man hath seen God at any time," He who held this nearness to the Father and possessed absolute knowledge of Him, even the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath given us a most blessed, glorious manifestation. The wisdom of God, the mind and will of God, the infinite tenderness, compassion, and condescending love of God, have been revealed and expressed in and through the Lord Jesus. To poor, guilty man the infinite majesty of God is a terror and dismay. But through the Son there has come to us a most comforting showing. Seeing the Father in and through Christ, we now know that He has an eye to pity us in our lost and low condition, a heart of loving sympathy for benighted and struggling souls, that He cares for us, that He is anxious for our salvation, and that abundant provision has been made for our deliverance from condemnation and all our miseries. See that you refuse not Him who speaks to you this day. If a letter came to you from the Chief Executive of this country, you would not despise it. If you were sick and advice came to you from a wise physician, you would not reject it. If you were in distress and aid came from your best and truest friend, you would not make light of it. Then hear the words that Jesus speaks to you this day.

2.

Who is invited? V. 25. Not the wise and prudent, that is, worldly-wise, who think themselves wise and prudent, so far advanced in wisdom as to despise the things concerning Christ, but the babes, not so much babes in years as babes in these child qualities: humble-minded, docile, honest-hearted, willing and anxious to learn, ready to receive and believe the truth when it is brought to them. V. 28, the laboring and heavy laden. The laboring and heavy laden describes all who are pressed down and burdened by a feeling of sin. It describes all whose consciences are set at work and who are brought to concern about their soul; all who are anxious about salvation and desire to have it; all who tremble at the thought of Judgment and know not how to pass through it, and of hell and are afraid of falling into it; all who long for heaven and fear they may not enter it; all who are distressed at the thought of their own sinfulness and crave deliverance. This was the state of mind in which the Jews were to whom Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost. Their consciences were awakened; they felt convinced and condemned; and when he had finished his sermon, we are told that they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This was the state of mind in which Saul was when Jesus met him going to Damascus and smote him to the ground. A light seemed to break in on his mind. He got a sight of his own enormous sin and danger, and we read that, trembling and astonished, he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This was the state of mind in which we see the jailer at Philippi. He was roused from sleep by an earthquake. His fear brought his sin to his remembrance, and he came and fell down before Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This is the state of mind Christ desires to see in each of us at the beginning of a new church-year. Only then are we prepared for His message.

3.

What is promised? Rest.

a) The first and greatest element of rest in Jesus is release from sin, the guilt of it, the condemnation on account of it.

b) The rest of heart and mind amid the cares and troubles of this life; not exemption from them, release from all trials and afflictions, but strength, composure, patience, in them. True and blessed rest, as it comes from the conviction that He knows of them and overrules them, so that they must ultimately make for our good. Illustration: In our Lutheran Hospital in St. Louis stands, in a conspicuous place, a marble statue of Christ after the famous model of Thorwaldsen. The inscription on the pedestal reads: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy leaden, and I will give you rest."

c) All this only preliminary to another rest beyond this present world: —

We shall be near and like our God.
O glorious rest, O blest abode!

What could be more worthy of welcome to sinners, restless creatures, such as we are? Here stands the eternal Son of God in the midst of this earth's weary and heavy-laden millions, whose burdens, pains, and heartaches God alone knows, and offers to cure the trouble of every such sufferer, to furnish what all so ardently crave.

4.

What is required? "Come unto Me." No long journey or laborious effort is required. He is easily found in His Word, His Sacraments, His Church. Again the invitation of Advent. Every time a lesson of the Bible is read, every time a holy text is wrought into discourse, every time the Sacrament is administered, it is the Savior's voice pleading reception. We need but lift a suppliant eye or breathe a penitential prayer that He would be to us a Savior, and He will give us what He promises. And the nearer we come to Him, and the more we learn of Him and trust in Him, the greater peace of mind we have. And thus coming to Him, we are to take His yoke upon us. That is, we are to confess ourselves His servants and turn all our energies to the doing of His will. The Jewish doctors had their conditions of discipleship; so Christ. There must be unqualified submission to Him as our Teacher. We must sit at His feet, renouncing all but Him. From His decisions we are to make no appeal. "Thus saith the Lord." — Then, too, He tells us, v. 29, that we are to be meek, forgiving, merciful, and kind. As followers of His we must do that which is becoming the Christian character and profession and be given to services of zeal in the promotion of His kingdom.

May the new church-year be a season of growth in the knowledge of our adorable Redeemer, of upbuilding and advancement in spiritual life, of much comfort and rest in the Lord, until we shall hear His final summons, "Come unto Me," and the home of eternal rest is reached. Illustration: In Newport Church, Isle of Wight, Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, lies buried. There is in the church a beautiful marble monument, showing in a striking manner the circumstances under which the princess died. She had been a prisoner in Cromwell's time, confined in Carlsbrook Castle. One day she was found dead, with her head leaning on the Bible, open at the words, "Come unto Me . . . rest." These precious words were evidently her consolation in life and in death. L. Buchheimer, Sr.

Second Sunday in Advent.

Luke 17, 26—30.

It is reported of that valiant voyager Christopher Columbus that, when he was nearing the continent which he discovered, he saw floating toward him in the water the branch of a tree. Most wonderfully significant it was. That green sprig told him and his disheartened, mutineering crew that somewhere, and in not too far a distance, there was that which they so frantically coveted — the goal of their agonizing suspense. Nor was it long before from the topmast rang out the cry that thrilled their hearts with a joy unspeakable, "Land ahead; land!" For 1900 years the ship of God's construction, the Christian Church, has been making her way across the ocean of time; her course is set; unvaryingly her compass points to a distant shore. She sails confidently, for her Master has told her that she shall reach the goal and anchor upon that new heaven and new earth wherein righteousness dwelleth. When that shall be, that indeed she does not know. Some, in unbelief and cold-hearted skepticism, say, Never. Cf. 2 Pet. 3, 4. Others, in their overwrought zeal and vague speculations, would go into the opposite extreme; they predict that on a particular day of such and such a year the Lord will return and the world will come to an end; and when that day designated has come and gone, the consternation and alarm which they might have caused, gives way to disappointment, a morbid distaste of the whole matter. Between the foolish prophets, on the one hand, and the scoffing sinners, on the other, the Church of God continues her heaven-bound voyage calmly and soberly, proclaiming her annual Advent message, bidding those who have ears to hear to prepare themselves for the inevitable day when the divine form of the Son of Man shall appear in the clouds of heaven, telling the waiting saints that their redemption has come. In this belief they are sustained and encouraged by the signs preceding the Last Day, the floating branches that herald the approaching shore.

In the text the Lord Jesus makes a comparison. What are the points of comparison? We note four.

1. *Materialism,* vv. 27. 28. This is not stated as though eating and drinking as well as marrying and giving in marriage were sinful actions; they are not; on the contrary, it is in obedience to a divine command that this is done. Where, then, lay the sin? In this: These things were their all, constituted their life; they had no use or time for anything else; their minds, their hearts, their schemes, centered in them. Our age extremely materialistic; an age of inventions, the steam-engine, the steamboat, the telegraph, the telephone, the automobile, the airship, the radio, and other startling inventions descriptive of our age. Commerce has assumed tremendous proportions, is the hub of the wheel of modern history. Wealth, enormous; the number of millionaires has greatly multiplied. Men are swallowed up in the objects and scenes, the schemes and pursuits, the glamor and indulgences, of sensual and earthly things.

2. *Immorality.* Before the Flood the marriage relation was scandalously desecrated. The lust of the flesh ran wild. A like form of immorality, even worse, prevailed in Sodom. Of the particular sin of the Sodomites we catch a glimpse in the story of the angels' visit to Lot's house, Gen. 19. The unspeakable sin which Lot's two daughters committed can be explained only if it be remembered that they had long breathed the stench-laden air of wicked Sodom. — Is our age immoral? Can we claim virtue in matters of dress? Are the films which thousands daily gaze upon pure? What still makes up the staple news of the day? fills our institutions and insane asylums? Other phases: "affinity," divorces, shirking of motherhood.

3. *Indifferentism.* Noah preached for 120 years by deed as well as word. He built the ark on the dry land, far removed from the water's edge. Men laughed him to scorn, doubted his sanity. God preached by a startling miracle. At the divine command, animals of every kind flocked to the ark. Nobody took notice of it. So the Sodomites. Lot raised his voice in warning; not even his sons-in-law heeded the warning. The miracle performed by the angel smiting them with blindness as they sought entry into Lot's house ought to have awakened them to the realization that there is a God who executes judgment upon the earth. Had no effect. To-day, are men indifferent? Materialism, immorality, makes them so. Take the Bible. Thousands of families have no Bible; in thousands of others it is never read. Grand old custom of Scripture-reading at meals is rapidly losing ground. How many so-called Christians are completely igno-

rant of the most familiar Bible-stories! (Quote an instance or two.) While Sunday-schools and Bible societies are distributing the Book of God, many professors of theology and ministers standing in Christian pulpits are busy assailing its authority. Take Sunday. Statistics prove a rapidly decreasing number of men in the churches. Sleeping, visiting, joy-riding, theatergoing, more and more taking the place of churchgoing. Manifest signs of the times; counterparts of the days of Noah and Lot among us.

4. The *suddenness,* the unexpectedness, with which judgment overtook the guilty. Not one of Noah's contemporaries outside of the members of his family had the slightest presentiment of the impending catastrophe. Peasant plowing in field. Carpenter building. In yonder house music and merriment. Suddenly the rain-clouds burst, and the sluice-gates of the deeps of the earth were flung wide open. Of the Sodomites we read that "the sun was risen upon the earth." The town began to stir in its roseate beams, as it had years and years before. Suddenly the heavens opened. Great masses, balls, of fire fell from the sky, and fire and brimstone consumed all. If the great world fire should now be kindled, would not the prophecy 1 Thess. 5, 3 be fulfilled?

What are we going to do to escape this sudden destruction?

a) Let us take heed lest we get under the spell of materialism. Not as if we should stop buying and selling, planting and sowing, marrying and being given in marriage; but never must we permit such activities, no matter how legitimate and even necessary, to crowd out devotional life. Let us take time, make time, if need be, for Bible-reading, prayer, churchgoing, and all religious duties. The great lesson for us to learn is to serve God in all our daily activities, to eat and drink, etc., with God, in His sight, to His honor; to let religion permeate and interpenetrate all that we think and say and do. Then it will matter not when Jesus comes. He will find us ready to meet Him.

b) To escape the judgment of the Flood, God directed Noah to construct an ark. Lot, fleeing from Sodom, was commanded by the angels to flee to Zoar. We, too, have an ark, a New Testament ark. God Himself, as the divine Architect and Artificer, has built it. Daily do we see before our eyes its towers and walls, hear regularly the bells, pleadingly, as it were, sending out an invitation — the holy Christian Church. There, in the midst of a world of sin and depravity, upon which God has pronounced His righteous judgments as clearly as upon the race of the antediluvians, it stands, the great, capacious Gospel Ark, a refuge of safety. Come whatever Jehovah may commission upon our guilty world, it is certain to ride safely above the tumultuous tempest and bring us gallantly to the celestial mountain, the Ararat of Heaven. — Have you entered into that Ark? Is your name enrolled among the list of passengers? Repentance; faith, Acts 2, 38; 16, 31. The Church may be termed "the New Testament Zoar." Have you fled for refuge to its altar? Safety lies in enlisting under Christ's banner as believing children of God, hearing His Word, worshiping and praising Him, receiving His Sacrament, walking the designated path of Christian obedience, never looking back, like Lot's wife, but following with unrelaxing energy after the things that make for our peace. L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

Third Sunday in Advent.

Matt. 3, 1—6.

On a close and sultry day, when the torrid days of a summer's sun have wilted the greenness of vegetation and all is drooping and withered, there not infrequently occurs one of nature's grandest phenomena. The rumbling of thunder is heard in the distance, first faintly, then increasing in volume; threatening clouds are seen hurriedly chasing each other across the darkening skies; flashes of lightning zigzag lively hither and thither, and after a few startling claps of thunder the rain descends in torrents, and the parched ground drinks in the rain and revives under the refreshing showers. A phenomenon like this in the religious world marked the appearance of John. The atmosphere in the land of Israel was sultry and close; spiritual life had sunk away into deadness and drought; the once living faith of the people of God had wilted into formalism, skepticism, hypocrisy; for the space of four hundred years, since the days of Malachi, the tongue of inspiration and prophecy had been mute; things had indeed become blighted and withered. In the midst of this sterility, like a gushing, mighty rain, comes the voice of one whose speech was winged with thunderbolts, whose words flashed lightning, and who caused the rivulets of reviving spirituality to flow over the parched soil. Upon the platform of our Christian meditation steps on this Sunday in Advent the familiar, rugged figure of John the Baptist, the messenger and forerunner of Him to whose coming in the flesh we are looking forward. When we remember how his birth had been announced by angel lips (the Temple scene); that upon him our Lord pronounced the highest eulogy He ever uttered with reference to any person, placing John on the loftiest pinnacle of greatness, Matt. 11, 11; that his was an extraordinary mission, we cannot but feel the deepest interest in the man. In this may the text aid us.

John the Baptist.

1. *Some features of his personal history.*
2. *The character of his preaching.*

May the witness he bore not fail of profit to our souls!

1.

Read the introductory verse, v. 1. A tract of land east of Jerusalem extending along the shores of the river Jordan as far as the Dead Sea; a monotonous waste, full of wild ravines and barren crags, the picture of desert desolation. It was here that the man chosen to be the forerunner of Christ spent the bloom of his youth, the promising years of his life, in solemn and studious communication with his God. To this strange, solitary abode must be added the peculiar apparel and diet, v. 4. At a time when men's habits had become exceedingly fastidious as to appetite and elegance of dress conceive John's stalwart form robed in a hide of the shaggiest camel's hair, held together by a broad belt, or girdle, of leather encircling his loins. As to the particulars of his diet, Bible expositors have exhausted pages as to what is meant. Locusts may mean the vegetable product obtained from the locust plant or, as Luther translates it in the German Bible, "grasshoppers," which constitute an article of food in parts of Asia Minor and Arabia to this day, eaten not so much from choice as from necessity; while honey, the other constituent of John the Baptist's meals, was obtained from among the rocks of the wilderness whither bees would swarm. — What was the purpose, we naturally question, of such a peculiar apparel and of such rigid and abstemious diet? By such exterior habits John would impress upon the people that he was a prophet, none else than the second Elijah, foretold by the last Old Testament prophet Malachi, who, referring to John, described him "as coming in the spirit and power of Elijah"; and of Elijah we read that "he wore a coarse garment and had a leathern girdle about his loins." John significantly adopted the same manner of dress. As to the diet, its purpose was a protest against the luxury and extravagance, of table and palate, of that pampered and degenerate age, an outstanding testimony of self-denial, temperance, abstinence. Nor should we entirely disregard these features. Not that we should leave our present habitations, hie away to the solitudes, or closet ourselves within the walls of a monastery or some hermit's retreat; not that we should adopt John the Baptist's particular garment, throw coarse sackcloth or skins of camel's hair over our forms; nor is it said that we must abstain from every comfort and convenience in our dwelling-places, such as carpets on our floors, and all ornaments, such as pictures on our walls, etc. God has created these things for men's use, and not only for the use of the ungodly, either. Christians, too, may use them with a perfectly good conscience and right. But here is the vital consideration — use them, do not abuse them, do not misuse them. One need not be a pessimist to discern that these very things, dress and food, are the absorbing centers of people's thoughts, activities, and interests. The Apostle Peter in his day, addressing women, had occasion to utter a sharp word regarding "that outward adorning of platting the hair and of wearing of gold and of putting on of apparel." What vanity it displays! What precious time it consumes! What thoughts it absorbs! Nor can the members of the sterner sex be said to be utterly free from transgression. And when it comes to the other consideration, it might be profitable for all of us to examine our ways in the matter of our diet, not merely from a physiological, but more so from a religious viewpoint. What excess, outright gluttony, and intemperance are men of this generation addicted to! The medical profession is telling us that we are literally digging our graves with our teeth. Over against such extravagance behold this rugged figure in Judea's wilderness, a representative of self-denial.

As to his communing in solemn concentration on the grand spiritualities of religion, what a noble example! In the whirl of constant association with man it becomes imperative at times far from diversions and attractions to meditate in some lone spot with one's soul and God. Without its seasons of solitary thought and secret reflection the life of the soul cannot be healthy life. It loses its vigor and elasticity. Like John the Baptist, so the best of men, the strongest of characters, those who have most influenced their fellow-men, have gathered conviction, strength, and preparation for life's mission in some retirement or seclusion to pray. The moments that find us occasionally closeted with our God are not wasted moments; they are the moments when the run-down battery of our soul charges itself with spiritual power. Think of our Lord's forerunner in this respect.

2.

V. 5. For a proper understanding of these words we must go back in spirit to those times. For the long period of over four hundred years no prophet had arisen in Israel, when tidings reached Jerusalem and the surrounding cities of a man whose appearance bore all marks of a prophet and whose lips were proclaiming the message of God; and immediately the desert swarmed with eager multitudes, hasting out to behold and hear this wonderful stranger. Whoever could leave his station and occupation, soldiers and merchants, Pharisees and Sadducees, paupers and profligates, men of every class and rank, all mingled on the dry and dusty roads leading to the banks of Jordan. A spiritual revival swept the land in stirring commotion. The whole impression was that it was most startling and electrifying. — And what lesson can we of our day gather from this signal occurrence? It is in the Kingdom of Grace as in the Kingdom of Nature. Hurricanes and tempests serve a good purpose; but as a rule it is the gentler showers that prove most effective. So the building up of a Church is not, as a rule, done so much by a phenomenal gathering in of large numbers through evangelistic efforts, as by the faithful, constant preaching of the regular ministry and the thorough instruction in the Word of God and the Catechism. To popularize a church, to swell its membership list, is too often to pauperize it, to please the masses, and to invite an element of attendants who want other attraction than merely the plain preaching of the Gospel of Christ and a type of true religion. Numbers, be it noted, are no criterion of gaging ministerial success and the character of a church. And yet, guarding against that conception, there is inspiration in numbers; the intent of the Gospel is that it be preached to every creature, so that, while conservatism is a glorious virtue and one that we love to associate with our Lutheran Church, conservatism does not mean that we should refrain from stretching our hands out to the multitudes and masses, from constraining the stranger to come in, as says the Master. Nor is this "constraining" merely the duty of the minister. Our members should be equally concerned. That churchless friend, that indifferent father and mother, that irreligious sister and brother, relative and stranger, residing with you under the same roof, have you ever given them invitation, urgently, fervently? There is no reason why the pews of this building should not be crowded to their utmost capacity if we all were impressed with a sense of obligation toward our own souls and toward the souls of others. A revival after the type of John the Baptist is always in place, for John's preaching was (vv. 2. 3): "Repent ye," "Prepare ye," etc. That was the twofold proclamation, or rather it was one: Prepare ye the way of the Lord by repenting. And that voice is still the voice of our present dispensation; and never does it ring out more clearly than at this particular season. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, the Messiah, He that was to come, is about to make His entry into the world in mortal flesh. Christmas, the festival of his birth, is approaching, a universal stir and spirit of preparation is abroad. And there is no other way of worthily preparing for Him but that shown by John the Baptist: "Repent ye"; make straight His path; clear away the obstructions and obstacles. There can be no right reception of Him unless there be a right understanding of that for which He came. That purpose is distinctly told us: He came "to save His people from their sins." Hence to the publicans who came to him, asking him what they should do, John said: Exact no more than that which is appointed you; be honest; avoid fraud and cheat. The soldiers who came to him, asking what they should do, were told by him: Do violence to no man, quit your wild manner of living, and be content with your wages. He admonished the Pharisees and Sadducees in words of cutting rebuke to abandon their hypocrisy. And so with us. Whatever your position and condition, straighten out your path. Is there any one who is lofty-minded? That proud heart of yours must be humbled and that haughty spirit brought down to the acknowledgment that in God's sight you are nothing but a helpless and condemned sinner. Or if any one among us is low and base in his thoughts and view of life, groveling like the prodigal amid the swine of evil habits, eating of the husks of earthly sensual pleasures and sinful indulgences, let him repent, smite his breast in true sorrow, flee to the Savior of sinners, and then, by the grace of God lead a better life with nobler aims and purer aspirations, according to the Word of God. Has any one grown crooked and perverse, has he deviated from the narrow path, become a stranger to the Lord and His people and His Church and fallen into other connections and ways? Let him resolve, with God's help, to walk uprightly, to cease his questionable connections, and to act as it becomes decent, reverent, consecrated followers of God. Is. 1, 18; Ps. 51, 1—5. Hymn 138, 4.

L. Buchheimer, Sr.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Mark 6, 17—29.

The morning star of the New Testament had risen on the banks of the river Jordan. On the same place from where the ancient Elijah had ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, did the New Testament Elijah appear, preaching the doctrine of repentance and proclaiming the coming of his Master. The resemblance between the two men is a most striking one. The same zeal and unbending firmness, the same energy and undaunted courage in reproving sin, irrespective where and in whom found, distinguished them both. Yes, even down to the minor particulars of dress and food did it extend. "This same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey." Universal attention did his ministry attract. "There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan." Men of every rank and of every character repaired to Jordan's banks — the abandoned publican and self-righteous Pharisee, the hardened soldier and profligate libertines; and what they heard from the lips of that austere desert preacher made their ears tingle and their hearts quake. A thorough and genuine revival swept the land. But brilliant as it was, the ministry of John was brief. It was not long before he changed the wilderness of Judea for a cell in prison. To understand this change with its subsequent tragedy, we must rehearse a few particulars.

Sitting at that time on Judea's throne, by the grace of the Roman government, was a member of the family which appears repeatedly in sacred story, a Herod, styled Herod Antipas. Like all the rest of the Herods he was a man of infamous character and was then living in illicit relation with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. On a journey to Rome, Herod had seduced her from her lawful husband, and she, being an ambitious and unprincipled woman and feeling the attraction of Herod's higher position, had yielded, going through the formality of a divorce and the mockery of a second marriage (a form of procedure with which the present generation is also very well acquainted). Of this relation John was not ignorant, and since he was, as the Savior testified in our Gospel-lesson, no "reed shaken with the wind," his sense of duty as a servant of God did not permit him to be silent regarding it. He had told the prince and his shameless paramour to the face: v. 18.

John did his duty, and his reward, no doubt, was such as he expected, though different from what it ought to have been. This honest reproof ought to have convinced Herod that John was the best subject in his kingdom; he ought to have congratulated himself to discover one so frank to address him in the language of truth; and had he been wise, he would have acted on his counsel. But instead of turning his anger upon himself and on the sin that was ruining his soul, he turned it against his reprover. His first inclination might have been to put him to death. However, his former veneration for the faithful preacher, and still more his dread of the people, by whom John was held in highest esteem, kept him from this murderous extreme, and he satisfied himself with casting the Baptist into prison. But there was one who from that hour regarded John with immortal hate and whose revengeful spirit this half-measure did not appease. The imperious Herodias could not forgive that honest sentence which had at once aroused her conscience and wounded her pride. She felt that even John's imprisonment would keep alive in the minds of the people the thought of her crime. Nothing would do but that the light of God which Herod was content to put under a bushel should be extinguished in blood. Her opportunity came. That, with its particulars and lessons, shall be the topic of our sermon.

The Martyrdom of John.

We shall follow the sequence of events as given by the inspired penman.

The celebration of birthdays by means of elaborate and sumptuous feasts, v. 21, was one of those Roman customs which the Herods had introduced among the Jews. It requires no stretch of the imagination to picture to ourselves the festival occasion, the accompanying pomp and display, the illuminated banqueting hall, the frequent outbursts of song and laughter, the clattering of wine-cups and vessels, and every other sound of revelry by night when reason yields the reins to pleasure. At a fixed period of the feast, to give additional zest to enjoyment, the door opens, and amid the trembling notes of soft and voluptuous music there sweeps into the banquet hall a lovely girl. Lightly dressed, displaying the graces of her perfect form, beautifully jeweled with a string of pearls and rosettes of diamonds, she floats nimbly along until she reaches the throne of the enraptured tetrarch and then springs into a dance. We shall not stop to describe in this holy place the manipulation she underwent; under the drill of skilled masters she no doubt did full justice to the art of Terpsichore, though thoughts might arise within us as to her womanly modesty in that company of men dissolved in the wine-cup and indulging in speech and acts of lewdness. The fair dancer was Salome, the daughter of Herodias, by Philip, her former husband.

We cannot pass the incident by without a remark very much in season. Amusements of some kind or other there must be. The call for them lies in our social nature. Mind and body must, in their very constitution, unbend themselves. Now, amusements are of three kinds. Some are innocent and lawful in whatever light they are viewed. Some are sinful and to be condemned in whatever light we may look at them. And some, although innocent in themselves, become unlawful and inconsistent with Christian character and conduct from the circumstances attending them and the sins to which they may lead and to which there is a tendency in the manner in which they are indulged in. And to this last class belongs dancing. With respect to the amusement which led to the martyrdom of John we are aware that it is almost universally practised and frequently accounted a necessary accomplishment of every polite education; with what improvement to our minds or our morals we could never really comprehend. But after all has been said that can be said in its favor, one consideration remains, which is, that the amusement in question is an affair, in its origin, in its tendency, its associations, purpose, and ends, altogether worldly. That, of course, has no weight with many; and with the people of the world, I admit, it is consistent to indulge in this sort of pastime. They violate no principle by it, they disregard no solemn vows on which they have professed to act. They have never taken any pledge or made any promise which implies the contrary. I am speaking to Christians. You vowed to give yourselves to God. You have pledged yourselves to come out from the world. You profess as Christians to be animated by the Spirit of God, to seek the glory of God, to live for heaven, to follow Him whose name you bear, to be watchful, prayerful. How does the whole arrangement, association, and process connected with dancing agree with such a profession and life? Let us bear in mind that many a course has had as melancholy a result as that of the dance of Salome. That I have spoken words as obnoxious to some as those which John spoke to King Herod I am aware of, but they have been words of Christian warning and of Christian fearlessness, and I care not for popular disfavor, just so it brings fruit in the hearts and conduct of those who desire to be filled and governed by God's Holy Spirit and to live for and with Christ.

To return to the narrative. Highly pleased with the performance of the maid and amid the ringing plaudits of his guests, Herod promised a reward. To make the matter worse, he set the seal of an oath upon it. In all likelihood he expected the damsel to ask for something in accordance with her years, some splendid ornament. However, she would first consult her mother. What, then, was his astonishment and his horror when the fair young creature, after a brief absence, returned and, among the many objects which a kingdom presented, petitioned: "I will that thou give me," etc. Unprincipled though Herod was, he could not listen to such a request unmoved, for John was "a just man and a holy"; neither cared he to invite the public reproach which his execution of John would be sure to bring upon him. But as he gazed upon that gorgeous assembly, all feelings of hesitation and pity vanished, and so without any form of trial or tedious delay the despot gave sentence that so it should be. We recoil at the dreadful picture which rises before us. The descent through long and dark passages, the door of the dungeon creaking on its rusty hinges, the man of God suddenly awakened from peaceful slumbers, the glimmering light of the torch, the uplifted flashing sword of the executioner, the gushing blood, the severed trunk, the gory head — what a sight! Then conveyed to the palace of festivity, where it is placed on a dish and carried in triumph to those who had requested it. Yes, Josephus informs us that Herodias proceeded to transfix with needles the tongue that had rebuked her adultery. —

A few lessons. When reading such an account, we are ready to ask why God ever permitted such a high-handed crime, such tyrannical cruelty. And many whose curiosity is stronger than their faith have been perplexed when they see Herod on his throne and John in prison, the one prolonging his wickedness in splendor and triumph, the other meeting with a violent death. Why should such things be? But it is not necessary that we should know why such things are. There are mysteries in providence as well as in redemption, and the Christian is not required to be the interpreter of them, for God's thoughts are above the thoughts of man. Nor need we fear for the honor of the Lord; He will always vindicate His ways. As to John, his life's work was done. He had performed his duty. And so the block on which his head lay to receive the executioner's ax was a soft one. Of Sir Walter Raleigh it is said that, when he was stretched upon the block to receive the death-blow, the executioner asked if his head was lying right. "Ah," said the good man, "it makes little difference how the head lies, just so the heart is right." Thus with this fearless preacher and herald of Christ. It made but little difference where or when or how he died. His heart was right with Christ. He had accepted Him as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Long before his malicious and revengeful murderers were feasting themselves with gloating looks upon his head, his spirit had been borne upward to those heavenly courts which no persecutor or unclean person can ever enter and where those who have been faithful unto death receive the crown of blessedness from the hands of a righteous Judge. As to his murderers, the Lord's word: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," met gradual, but positive fulfilment. Though John's mangled body had been stored away in some tomb by the loving hands of sadly bereaved disciples, his memory passed from the prison-cell into the guilty soul of the voluptuous murderer and haunted him with greater denunciation than ever before. Oh, for the power of that inward witness which the greatest of England's writers says "makes cowards of us all"!

Nor only this. The monarch whose daughter Herod had divorced from him in favor of Herodias took the field against him, and after a dreadful battle, Herod was completely defeated. To add to his misfortune, the Roman emperor hurled him, dishonored, from his throne and banished him to the solitudes of Gaul, where he and his abandoned queen died in exile, poverty, and disgrace. As to the dancing girl Salome, it is reported that she perished miserably on the ice while attempting to cross a frozen river in Spain. Thus justice, with its foot of velvet and its hand of steel, overtook the guilty. Cf. Gal. 6, 7. Verily, the way of the transgressor is hard!

In conclusion, let us seek to be as honest witnesses for the truth as he who sealed its testimony with his life's blood. The days when witness for Christ meant the severance of one's head from the body, physical martyrdom, are fortunately over, but the quarrel between piety and wantonness has not ceased. The devil is still the god of this world, and the world is no friend of genuine religion, as every out-and-out confessor of it will readily find out. But let that not deter you. There is no sacrifice too great for the cause of truth or the discharge of Christian duty, social standing, friendship, liberty, or life. May we ever bear in mind whose we are, namely, His whose forerunner John was, and may we ever be willing for His sake to endure scorn and sacrifice, yes, if need be, death! We, too, shall never have occasion to regret our devotion to Him nor the sacrifice we made. Amen.

L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

Sunday after Christmas.

Luke 2, 25—32.

Christmas has again come and gone. Children have sung their happy songs, and we who have passed the time of childhood have again become like little children and joined our voices in the carols. Songs now begin to hush. Decorations taken down. Christmas will soon be gone and — forgotten? Yes, by many. Like Mary we keep all these things and move them about in our hearts.

What does Christmas bring to us to keep in our hearts? Is there anything beyond the tree, the presents, the demonstrations of friendship? Christmas has gifts of permanent value. As the fading, falling flower leaves behind growing, ripening fruit, so the passing Christmas, if it has not come in vain, produces lasting fruit. The mere birth of Christ in Bethlehem is not sufficient; He must be born in you also.

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee,
Then art thou still forlorn.

The Christmas fact benefits only where it is appropriated. Simeon with the holy Child in his arms signifies appropriation. In him we see the Christmas fruit fully ripened. His heart is like a well-watered garden; he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

The Christmas Fruit in Simeon's Heart: —

1. Possession; 2. Praise; 3. Service.

1.

Our text is one of the favorite Bible stories; subject of many paintings. Simeon was one of the true Israelites. Looked for the Lord's Christ; desired ardently to behold Him before death. From the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. 49, 10, from the prophecy of Daniel, chap. 9, 24, he had learned that the fulness of time was near and had asked God to grant him the grace to see the Messiah. His prayer was heard, v. 26. When Joseph and Mary brought the Child into the Temple, Simeon also "came by the Spirit into the Temple," v. 27. As Joseph and Mary entered the court of the Temple, Simeon approached them and took the little Child into his arms, v. 28. Holding it there, his heart was filled with the holy joy of possession.

However, what he did there in the Temple is but a symbol of what he had been doing all his life. We are told that he was a just and devout man, v. 25. He had clung fast to the faith of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while empty formalism and vain political dreams had overrun almost all the others. He waited for the consolation of Israel, v. 25. He believed the promises which God had made to the fathers concerning His Christ. He pondered them and eagerly looked for their consummation. As he now took the Child into his arms, so he had long since taken him into his heart and appropriated Him by faith.

Confident appropriation and blissful possession is the first fruit, insuring to the heart perennial Christmas. Appropriation of the Christ-child means that the Christmas light is shining into the naturally dark heart. What could be more blessed?

Is appropriation possible to us? We cannot take the Christ-child into our arms. Are we on that account denied the joy of possession? Possession did not come to Simeon because he held the Child in his arms, but because he had enshrined Him in his heart. What he did in the Temple is the outward symbol of an inward act. Possession is by faith. Whoever believes the song of the angels, etc., possesses Christ and all His treasure: righteousness, pardon, and peace.

Is faith possible to us? Our hearts are sluggish, slow to believe, prone to doubt. Is not the very Christmas-story losing its thrill? Faith we cannot create by ourselves. The joy of possession does not depend on our weakness, but on the activity of the Spirit of God. Simeon did not come into the Temple of his own accord, v. 27. What the Spirit did for Simeon he does for us. By the Gospel, by the Christmas-story, He calls and enlightens us, new-creates our hearts so that we behold Jesus as "the Chiefest among ten thousand" and the one "altogether lovely," receive Him, and enshrine Him in our hearts.

Has this possession come to you? Do you look upon the Christ-child as your very own? Do you find your joy at this season chiefly in the blessings He brings? Happy man that you are! You dwell in no fool's paradise, but in blissful reality. Christmas fruit is ripening in your heart.

2.

When the joy of possession filled Simeon's heart as he stood holding the Child in his arms, his lips burst out in a paean of praise, vv. 29—32. He had reached the climax of his life. The anxious night of watching was over for him; upon him had risen the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. God dismissed him in peace. He had seen the salvation from sin, death, and the devil which the Lord had prepared for all people; he had seen the crowning glory of Israel; he had seen achieved the goal for which God had separated unto Himself the children of Israel from the Gentile nations round about; he had seen the Light that should lighten the Gentiles out of the darkness of idolatry and sin and damnation and guide them to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Now he is satisfied, knowing that, when his own end will come, it will come in peace. Leaving this world, he goes to a reconciled Father. Such is the fulness of his heart, issuing forth in blessing. In the *Nunc Dimittis* we see the second Christmas fruit ripening in Simeon's heart: joyful praise.

Has the fruit of praise ripened also in your hearts? You joined in the song of the angels. Was it with the heart as well as the lips? Did you gain again the blissful assurance that, when God calls you, you may depart this life in peace, knowing that there remaineth a rest for the children of God? If as a little, helpless child, Jesus carried

Simeon through the fear of death, how much more can He as the mighty Savior, who comes victorious from Bozrah, his garments stained with the blood of your many enemies, carry you through the last, bitter struggle into the peace and calm of eternal life! Possibly your Christmas song was pitched in a minor key, punctuated by sobs and sighs of sorrow and bereavement. Be not dismayed on that account. Imperfect, weak, and halting praise is not despised. The Christmas light shines brightest when set off by the encircling gloom of human sorrow. He who has prepared for Himself praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings will not reject your praise. But do not remain amidst the ashes of your hopes. Earthly sorrow must not spoil your sense of God's blessing. If Christmas found your hearts bleak and bare, may it not pass before it has filled them again with the radiance of the true light. God grant that the second Christmas fruit may ripen in your hearts! May you sing, "Glory to God in highest heav'n," etc.

3.

Simeon did not bless God in silence. Like the shepherds he wanted all to hear the importance and significance of that little Babe, vv. 30—32. Far into the night of Gentile darkness shall this Christmas light shine, revealing, unveiling, and making plain, the pardoning grace of God. The third Christmas fruit: service in leading others to Christ.

The words of Simeon have resounded from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. We belong to those blessed by these words, for we are of Gentile origin and our fathers worshiped, not the true God, but Wotan and Thor. Into our darkness has shined the light of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. By this grace, proclaimed in Simeon's words, we are now Christians.

Simeon's voice has long been hushed in death. His message must go on. Into the uttermost parts of the earth the light of the Gentiles must shine. "Our Christmas candles are to cast the light of salvation not only into the darkness of our own night, but also into the darkness of Gentile and Jewish night that it, too, may shine with the glory of God's grace in the salvation of Christ Jesus."

Has Christmas borne in your heart the fruit of service? Having heard the angels' song and Simeon's declaration, has your heart been fired with zeal to do all that lies in your power to make known the glad tidings? Will you refuse to do for your fellow-men what a murderous Herod did for the Wise Men from the East?

God grant that you bring forth abundantly the Christmas fruits: joyful possession, cheerful praise, and ready service.

PAUL F. BENTE.

Sunday after New Year.

Matt. 9, 9—13.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Such was the call of Advent. Behold, the kingdom is established. Such was the message of the Christmas-story and of the account of Christ's circumcision. Who can become a citizen of this kingdom? That is the question answered in our text. It exposes —

Two Common Fallacies about Heaven.

1. *Outward religion suffices for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.*
2. *Sin excludes from the kingdom of heaven.*

1.

Text shows us Jesus after the conversion of Matthew, eating with publicans and sinners. Pharisees criticized the Lord's generous conduct. They approached the disciples of Jesus in an attempt to estrange them from their Master with the words in v. 11. The question insinuated that "birds of a feather flock together." Your Master's delight in the company of sinners shows you that He is no better Himself. Hearing them, Jesus answered their question, v. 12. He rules out their insinuation, v. 12b. This meal was not an ordinary social intercourse. Here were "they that were sick" and among them "a Physician." Only on those terms were they together. Christ was not stooping to the level and the conduct of these sinners.

After rebuking the false insinuation, Christ condemns the Pharisees outright, v. 13. Sacrifice was the boast of the Pharisees. They claimed to walk blamelessly in all the laws and ordinances of God. They even boasted of more good works than God had commanded. Fasted twice a week; gave the tenth of all they had, garden crops included. But their religion was only outward. They lacked mercy. Strained gnats and swallowed camels; made long prayers and devoured widows' houses; expelled sinners and made no effort to save them. Much sacrifice, no mercy. "Religious," but no love in their hearts. Hence worthless. Whited sepulchers. They needed instruction in the most elementary obligations of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. If possible, still farther removed from citizenship than were the sinners and publicans with whom Jesus sat at meat.

To be outwardly religious does not make a man a citizen of the Kingdom. Allegiance to the Kingdom depends on the fealty of the heart, Matt. 15, 8; Is. 1, 11. 12.

The words of Jesus suggest to us, who belong to the church, some earnest self-examination. Bless God in church and curse the neighbor out of church? Pray and sing while the heart seethes with bitterness? Ask God to forgive and refuse to pardon the neighbor? Revel in the love of God as preached in church and refuse to show love and mercy to the poor and helpless? Contribute liberally to church purposes and reimburse yourself by cheating your fellow-men and taking advantage of them in trade? Can you recognize as your sister and brother in Christ the repentant fallen man and woman? Does it give you secret satisfaction that some acquaintance of yours must some day answer to God for injuries done you or for sins you do not happen to commit? Does it irritate you to think that God receives the man who has spent his life in sin, but repents on his death-bed? Is your eye evil because God is good? Friend, if you must answer yes to any of these questions and the answer reflects your habitual state of mind, you have not the mind of a child of God, you are not a child of your Father in heaven, not a member of Zion. Your religion is cant and sham; you are a whited sepulcher.

If this is true of any of you who hear me, let me beseech you not to leave this house of God without sincere repentance. Do not harden your heart. Do not continue in sinful pride. Do not dismiss the matter in indifference. These words of Christ were not spoken to condemn you, but to win you. Heed the diagnosis of the Great Physician. And hear Him not only when He tells you who cannot enter the kingdom, but also when He exposes the second fallacy about entering the kingdom of heaven and tells you at the same time who can become a citizen.

2.

V. 12. The disease is sin. As fever robs a man of his appetite, saps his energy, making him weak and listless, so sin, original sin and actual, fills a man with loathing and contempt for God. It unfits him for any good work. The carnal mind is enmity against God. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," etc., Matt. 15, 19.—The sick, cf. v. 12, are the sinners. And sinners are the very ones Jesus calls. V. 13. Sinners are material for citizens. Pharisees thought sinners unfit for the kingdom of heaven. Hence they scorned Jesus sitting among sinners. Wrong. It is a fallacy that sinners cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. "Jesus sinners doth receive." No man excluded on account of his sin.

But sinners are not called into the Kingdom to continue in sin. Jesus calls to repentance, v. 12. He shows the doom of sin and then invites with the saving power of grace. The call reaches the heart, kindles the spark of faith, converts men, and translates them out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

Our text furnishes in Matthew an example of how sinners are called, v. 9. Matthew, or Levi, his former name, was a publican, *i. e.*, a tax-collector. Publicans were notorious for impudent exactions. Cheats and grafters. Matthew certainly a sinner. Seeing Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, Jesus did not draw away from him, but said, "Follow Me." The publican was made a citizen of Christ's kingdom and even given an honored position, being made one of the inspired writers of the record of Christ's life and work.

"Follow Me." Matthew knew the call did not mean that he should follow Jesus into sin and that it would not permit him to continue amassing ill-gotten gains. Leave the old life, the toll-gate, your profits and friends, your ease and pleasure, and become a disciple and a learner.

Much was demanded of Matthew. But "Follow Me" was a powerful call of grace, proceeding from the heart of Him who is Love, spoken by lips on which no guile was ever found, pronounced by Him whose works proved that the Father was with Him, 2 Cor. 4, 6. It awakened Matthew to a realization of his sinful condition and his alien status, exalted him above the filthy copper and tarnished silver, kindled faith, and instantly converted the child of wrath into a son of grace, took him out of the devil's kingdom and enrolled him among the citizens of heaven.

Matthew brought forth fruits of repentance, v. 9. He broke completely with his old life; laid aside the proud name of Levi and adopted the humble name of Matthew, *i. e.*, a gift, signifying that he considered his new life the gift of God. Matthew's example shows that sin need exclude no man from the Kingdom.

The door of heaven is thus opened so wide that none need remain out. Christ's kingdom is a great hospital, where the diseased who feel the poison of sin in their veins may find healing. Those who are whole and righteous in their own conceits alone find no accommodations. But the sinner is welcome to come and be cured, v. 13. "Behold the Lamb of God, which," etc., John 1, 29. Cf. 1 John 1, 7; John 3, 16. Hymn 49, 4.

May the call to enter the Kingdom not find you hesitating and vacillating! Postponing may be fatal. The rich young man thought he could not forsake his wealth, and it is doubtful whether its weight was ever removed from his shoulders; Felix postponed his conversion to a more convenient season, which never came. Be like Matthew. Come promptly. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Follow implicitly. Do not look back like Lot's wife. Come clean. Make no compromise with your former sins, Luke 9, 62. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance and live before God in newness of life. (Hymn 51.)

PAUL F. BENTE.

First Sunday after Epiphany.

John 6, 28—40.

In order to understand the words of our text, we shall do well to study the entire situation.

For some months, Jesus had been concentrating His missionary efforts on Galilee. He had sent out His disciples on their first missionary journey. They had returned full of joy over, and interest in, the work. The people seemed stirred and expectant. They were beginning to focus their attention upon Jesus and His message.

In the midst of this excitement, news came that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Deep emotion, both of joy and sorrow, prompted Jesus to leave the scene of His recent activities and, crossing the Sea of Galilee, to repair to the less populated region east of the lake. Hardly had he stepped into a boat with His disciples when a great multitude hastened to meet him where He would land, passing along the western shore of the lake northward. When Jesus saw the people there, He had compassion on them, for they seemed like sheep without a shepherd. Again He broke the Bread of Life to them and ministered to their sick. Toward evening the disciples suggested that the multitude be dismissed, so that they might buy food. But Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat." When they found only five barley loaves and two fishes, Jesus took the scant supply and closed the day with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand.

"This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world," such and similar comments were heard among the multitude, and before long enthusiasts in the crowd suggested that Jesus be proclaimed king

Forestalling any such demonstration, Jesus constrained His disciples to leave in their boat. After having sent away the multitude, He Himself withdrew for an hour of prayer and intimate fellowship with His Father. His heart was heavy.

Early the next morning the crowd began to gather again. They knew that Jesus had not left with the disciples. When they did not find Jesus and saw no trace of the disciples, they concluded that both Jesus and the disciples most probably would be found on the other side of the lake. They hastened over to Capernaum, and when they found Jesus, they said, "Rabbi, whence camest Thou hither?"

Rebukingly Jesus said to them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him God the Father sealed."

Then follows our text, in which Jesus tells the people that He is the Bread from heaven, sent by God for the purpose of satisfying the wants of men's souls, that therefore they ought to believe in Him and, believing, be made glad. The leading thought of our text, then, is: —

Jesus Satisfies the Heart Hunger of Men.

1.

The multitude was so anxious to find Jesus because He had fed them. Surely Jesus satisfies the physical needs of men. He did feed the multitude in the wilderness. And did He not heal their sick? Did He not go about doing good among the miserable children of men? And so Jesus to-day is interested in our physical weal and woe. Our wants and our needs are ever before Him. Seated at the right hand of the majesty of God, He mightily rules over all things in heaven and on earth. He takes particular care of His children. He bids them, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

When the storms of life arise and our frail craft is battered by the winds, our loving Jesus draws near to us and speaks to us words of comfort and of cheer, and we hear Him saying, "Be of good cheer. It is I, be not afraid." And in the strength of renewed faith we boldly pass through the storms of life. Even though we are in danger of sinking, the hand of Jesus will reach down to us and draw us up out of the depths. Confidently do we sing: —

Jesus, Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea.
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee.
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

When at last I near the shore
And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
"Fear not, I will pilot thee."

However, it is a small matter for Jesus to give us "things." Even the unbelievers receive many physical blessings from His bountiful hand, which He opens to satisfy the desires of every living thing. We are to receive greater blessings from our Savior.

The multitude was looking for bread for their stomachs. Jesus said: "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the Last Day." Jesus is the Bread of Life, who satisfies the heart hunger of men not only for the world that now is, but also for the world that is to come.

Those who have eaten of this Bread of Life know the satisfaction they have found. Such as have not eaten of it, have no understanding for it. And yet, are we not often forgetful of the real blessing which Jesus would bring us? We need to be reminded of it again and again. Would you care to have taken away from you everything that Jesus has brought into your life? Think of the sweet assurance that you have heard in the hour when sin lay heavy upon you and you came on bended knee to pour out your sorrow before the Throne of Mercy and you knelt in deep contrition before the altar of the Lord to be told: "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." And then with head bowed down and heart lifted up you were a guest at His table and heard His words: "This is My body, given for you, and My blood, shed for the remission of your sins." And you lifted up your voice in thanksgiving: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Remember how often, when you came together with your fellow-Christians to worship the Lord in prayer and praise and thanksgiving, you were lifted up out of the slough of despair, your troubles disappeared like mist, your burdens seemed easier to carry, and you managed to lift yourself up over the disappointments of life and every prospect seemed brighter. Remember when in that hour of darkest woe you laid away what was left of your beloved one into its last resting-place and "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" spelled to your sorrowing heart a void, an emptiness, a loss which no one knows who has not experienced it; remember how then the reassuring words echoed in your heart, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and once again your faith triumphed, and you were more than conqueror through Him who loved us.

O yes, Jesus satisfies the heart hunger of men! He has satisfied your heart hunger. Who would live without Him? (Hymn 88.)

2.

Jesus *can* satisfy our heart hunger. Either His audience in Capernaum did not know whereof He was speaking, or they doubted that He could do what He said He could do. In any event, they asked for a sign from heaven. Moses had given them a sign from heaven, the manna in the wilderness. That was a great sign. Could Jesus give them such a sign?

Jesus reminded them of the fact that it was not Moses who gave them the bread from heaven, but His Father. And now His Father has again sent them bread from heaven, not bread like that which He had given through Moses; He now gave them the living Bread, Jesus Himself.

That is why Jesus can satisfy the heart hunger of men. He came from heaven. He is the only-begotten Son of God, who became incarnate for the very purpose of bringing us life. He came to destroy death. He came to take away the mother-tincture of all our troubles, sin.

Do we need a sign? His coming itself is the great sign from heaven that He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. His coming was foretold throughout the Old Testament ages. The time, the place, and the manner of His miraculous conception and birth and the purpose of His coming, all was foretold by the prophets of old. His advent was announced to the world by heavenly signs and wonders. Messengers from on high announced His birth to sinful mankind and bade men rejoice. A star led strangers from far away to His birthplace, so that they, too, might worship Him and so end their quest. When He entered upon His public ministry, a voice from heaven testified, "This is My beloved Son." When He had finished His course upon earth, another cycle of signs and wonders called attention to Him, and a messenger from on high announced His victorious triumph: "He is risen. He is not here!" And so His advent into the world, His life in the world, His exit from the world, are convincing proofs that He was indeed sent by God to be the Bread of Life.

"He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." That is a bold statement. And yet does not the experience of mankind bear out the truth of this statement? Was Paul beside himself when he spoke so convincingly of this Bread of Life before Felix and Agrippa? Was Peter a deluded fanatic when he insisted, "We cannot but speak of the things that we have seen and heard"? Are we to believe that the aged patriarch of Smyrna spoke foolishness when he boldly said before the Roman magistrate, "Eighty and six years have I served my Lord Christ, and He has never done me wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my King, who has saved me"? You know the story of Charlotte Elliott and her beautiful hymn. There was a woman in whose heart there was nothing of peace and happiness; she was tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within and without, until finally she came to Jesus and found in Him what elsewhere she had sought for in vain. Read "Just as I Am," the hymn in which she speaks of her experience, and then ask yourself, Is it possible that these are empty words, merely beautiful rhythm falling pleasingly upon our ears, but empty words, meaningless phrases? And so the common experience of all who have tasted of this Bread of Life testifies in unison to the truth of the Savior's word: "He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

3.

God grant that none of us belong to that class of people of which the Savior complains so bitterly: "Ye also have seen Me and believe not." Here was Jesus, ready to satisfy the heart hunger of men, but they would not. If anything ever seemed a failure, it was the preaching of Jesus. Read the entire sixth chapter of John from which our text is taken. "This is a hard saying, who can believe it?" that was the reaction of the people. Many of the Lord's disciples went back and walked with Him no more, so that He felt constrained to turn to the Twelve and ask them, "Will ye also go away?"

Who will fathom the depths of the depravity of the human heart? Who will explain the mystery? Did they not know that they needed this Bread of Life? Did they not believe that Jesus could satisfy their heart hunger?

"No man can come unto Me except it were given unto him by My Father." Thus Jesus Himself gives us a key to this mystery — "given unto him by My Father."

May the Spirit of God be given us to take away the veil from our eyes and to quicken us anew, so that we, too, may find peace and satisfaction in Him who is the Bread of Life, who alone can satisfy the heart hunger of men! When others turn away and the Lord asks us, "Will ye also go away?" may the blessed experience of our own life urge us to exclaim with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life, and we have believed and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." ARTHUR BRUNN.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Matt. 12, 46—50.

Our text tells us how the Lord Jesus on one occasion refused to recognize His relatives. This happened in the early Galilean ministry of the Lord. The scene is Capernaum, which was the Lord's headquarters during this period of His public ministry. From there Jesus made missionary journeys into the outlying districts of Galilee. His preaching and His miracles aroused the people. When, after one such missionary journey, He returned to Capernaum, a great crowd gathered in and around the house where He was. Away out on the edge of this crowd were His relatives. They could not get near the Lord. So they passed the word along that His mother and His brethren "stood without, desiring to speak with Him." When the word reached Jesus, He said, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" Stretching forth His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

So Jesus refused to recognize His relatives. That seems very strange, especially since His mother was among them. We ask: —

Why Did Jesus Not Recognize His Relatives?

1. *They evidently believed they had a prior claim because they were His relatives.*
2. *They did not do what everybody must do if He would be recognized by Jesus.*

1.

Who were these relatives of Jesus? Of course, we know His mother. How about the "brethren"? Some believe that they were children of Joseph and Mary. Others believe that they were children of Joseph by a former marriage. We find a number of references to the brethren of Jesus. If any one wishes to believe that they were children of Joseph and Mary, he is at liberty to do so. In all probability this was not the case, however. We know that the terms "brother" and "sister" were used in a wider sense than we commonly use them. We know that Jesus had a cousin who is called the "brother" of Jesus.

The facts in the case seem to be these. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a sister whose husband's name was Alphaeus. They had children. It seems that both Joseph and Alphaeus died before Jesus entered upon His public ministry and that the two widowed sisters with their children lived in one household and together moved to Capernaum when Jesus made Capernaum His headquarters. The "brethren," then, in all probability were cousins of Jesus. Surely they were very close to Him. They had grown up with Him. They looked upon Him as belonging to their family.

Strange to say, we read of these brethren that they did not believe on Jesus. They were not openly hostile to Him. They did not side with the outspoken enemies of Jesus. However, they did not believe that He could be the Messiah, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. It seems they believed that He was a fanatic, a sort of a religious crank. Mark tells us that, when they observed Jesus in His ministry, they said, "He is beside Himself." They believed that the best service they could render Him was to take Him back home, to quiet, quaint Nazareth, where He would find Himself again.

How about Mary? Did she share their opinion? Perhaps she, too, was unduly disturbed. The whole life of Jesus must have been a mystery to her. She realized that her beloved Jesus was exposed to the gravest possible danger. Down in Jerusalem already she must have noticed the bitter opposition with which He met. Now a delegation from Jerusalem had come to Capernaum. In Jerusalem they must have heard of the great religious excitement which His preaching and His miracles had caused. They came to Capernaum to put a stop to that thing. Even now they were mingling with that crowd and accusing Jesus of being in league with the devils. It is not difficult to see that Mary would be much worried, and even if she did not in all things share the opinion of the "brethren," she must have felt a great concern for Jesus. Was it not her duty as mother to try to save Him?

Both Mary and the "brethren" then felt that they had a right to be heard and that Jesus must listen to them because of their family connection.

Did you ever feel very important in the family of Jesus, in the Church of Jesus? Did you ever feel that because of some position you occupy or because of some privilege you enjoy or because of some station in life into which you have been placed you enjoy a right of priority? Listen, there is a lesson here for you.

Jesus does not recognize any right of priority. Even His mother and His brethren cannot be recognized on this basis. As far as priority is concerned, He does not know them. Do you remember that at the wedding at Cana His mother tried to tell Him what He ought to do and that He said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Do you remember that two disciples asked through their mother that in the great kingdom they be privileged to sit one on the right and the other on the left hand of the Lord? You remember what Jesus said? "Ye know not what ye ask."

Jesus does not recognize any right of priority. If you enjoy special advantages over others, then special duties and special obligations are laid upon you; for unto whom much is given, from him much will be required. But do not demand any special recognition.

There must be great danger that many Christians fall into this trap. Jesus speaks of the danger time and again. The story of the laborers in the vineyard brings out a warning. Let us beware of claiming special recognition because of special privileges. Let us rather see in them special duties and obligations. Not some official position, not some tie of blood which unites us with some eminent Christian, not even a family connection with the Lord Jesus Himself, bestows salvation upon any one. "By faith are ye saved"; there is no other way.

2.

A second reason why Jesus did not recognize His relatives was this, that they did not do what everybody must do if he would be recognized by Jesus.

They seemed to love Him and in their fashion thought a great deal of Him. Indeed, they thought so much of Him that they believed they must stop Him from going any farther into the danger which they saw. They thought a rest cure among the hills of Nazareth would do Him much good. And it was up to them to see that He would get it. But withal they did not believe in Him.

That is the greatest injustice any one can do to Jesus, saying all sorts of nice things about Him, but not believing in Him, not believing what He says of Himself, not believing that He is speaking the truth when He says that He is the Light of the world, the Savior and Redeemer of sinful mankind. The only compliment that you can pay to Jesus is summed up in these words: "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." And what is the will of His Father in heaven? He Himself thus defines this will of His Father: "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life." To see the Son and believe on Him and through Him have everlasting life, that is the will of the Father in heaven. For this reason, St. Paul also said to the Athenians: "God *commandeth* all men everywhere to repent"; and to repent implies to believe on Jesus. God does not leave this to man's choice. God commands men to repent, for this is His will.

Would you be related to Jesus? Would you be among those whom He recognizes as belonging to Him? Then you must do the will of His Father in heaven, believe in Him. Nothing else will do.

We need to remember this. The other day a meeting was announced in which tributes to the founders of great religions were paid by the adherents of other faiths. Rabbi Lyons, of Brooklyn, gave an appreciation of Jesus on this occasion. Surely the honored Rabbi would say many nice things about Jesus. One need not be a Christian to do that. Jesus has been the greatest Benefactor of all mankind. Whether people believe in Him or not, they all have been blessed by Him in many, many ways. And so it is not difficult even for a Rabbi to pay a tribute to Jesus. Did the Rabbi also say that Jesus is the Son of God, who came into this world to be the world's Redeemer? Did he encourage his audience to hasten to the foot of the cross and there find the healing for their sins? Hardly, for then he would no longer be an adherent of another faith. And yet, that is the only confession and testimony that Jesus desires and demands, John 8, 24; Matt. 16, 16—18.

How many people say very many nice things about Jesus! Jesus is very popular, so popular that almost every group claims Him. He is supposed to have been this, that, and the other thing, — everything but the Savior. And yet, that is the only thing He wishes to be. If He is not that, then all the other tributes amount to nothing. And if you do not believe Him to be that, do not expect that Jesus will recognize you as belonging to His family.

"Whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." Lord, help us to do this will!

ARTHUR BRUNN.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Luke 4, 38—44.

Our text offers an opportunity to observe Jesus in His work as preacher and missionary. The study of this text will be very profitable, for we are His successors in this work.

It is very *difficult* work. It seems to be growing more and more difficult because of the growing opposition without, and the lamentable indifference within, the Church. There are so many idlers in the Church, who, though they have put their hands to the plow, yet are forever looking back. What if all the members of all the Christian churches were filled with enthusiasm for the work for which they have been called! Would the records of the Church not tell a different story from that which we are reading to-day? — Then, too, there is great danger that the Church may fritter away her time and her energy on secondary matters and neglect the work of prime importance. Secondary matters often loom up so big before the eyes of the people that to them they overshadow the real work of the Church. Let us, then, study —

The Great Prophet of Nazareth at Work.

1. *He is filled with a holy devotion to His work.*
2. *He does not fritter away His time on non-essentials.*

1.

Our text presents a summary of Christ's work in Galilee. If you will read the entire fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, from which our text is taken, you will readily see this.

In the first part of the fourth chapter we find the story of the Temptation. Then we read of the first sermon which Jesus preached in Nazareth. Without any explanatory remarks we next find Jesus in the synagog at Capernaum. Then He is in the house of Simon Peter, where He heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. Next we are told that on the evening of that day a great multitude came to the house where Jesus was, bringing their sick to Jesus that He might heal them. Early the following morning, Jesus withdrew to a lonely place for prayer and meditation. He was found by the people, who tried to persuade Him to stay with them; but Jesus said: "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefor am I sent," and He preached in the synagogs of Galilee. So our text gives us a cross-section of the Savior's activities in Galilee.

The first thing that strikes us in this record is the Savior's devouring devotion to His work. "I must preach the kingdom of God,... for therefor am I sent." And He preached in the synagogs of Galilee, first in Nazareth, then in Capernaum; then He preached in Peter's house, then surrounded by a large group of people. The next morning

He started out again to proclaim the Gospel — going, going, all the time, day by day, from early till late. There seems to be a great dynamic power that is driving Him along. Busy, busy, all the time. "I must preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God." That was the one purpose, the one object, of His life. He is tireless, John 2, 17.

The secret of this never-waning devotion and zeal is found in the fact that He loves, aye, *loves,* the souls of men and lives in constant communion with God, His Father. He is very busy, but not so busy as to neglect His own spiritual life. He takes time, even though it be early in the morning, before anybody is astir, to withdraw from everything and everybody for an hour of communion and fellowship with His heavenly Father. So He feeds His own soul and always and again fills Himself with spiritual power for the work that He must do.

It was not a path of roses which He had to travel. There were many disappointments and many heartaches. There was the great problem of making the people understand what it was all about. He had to overcome that materialistic notion of the Messiahship which the people entertained. The idea of a "bread-king," the hope of a great national "come-back," which had been in the heads of the people for centuries, had to be dispelled. We all know that nothing is quite so slow as a process of education. Take a people who for a generation or two, let alone a century or two, have been fed up on some pet idea and try to drive that out of them and show them that it is all wrong, that they need to give it up and accept the very opposite, and then you will have some idea of the problem which confronted Jesus in His public ministry.

But He never lacks enthusiasm for His work. "I must preach the kingdom of God, . . . for therefor am I sent." And He nourishes His enthusiasm, and He keeps up the fire in His soul through His steady, constant communion and fellowship with God. He never neglects to spend that hour away from the maddening crowd in solitude, feeding His soul and filling up His heart again and again with devotion to the cause for which He lived.

What an example Jesus has given us! It is an example which we shall do well to follow also in our earthly vocation. No matter how trying your work may be, no matter how many obstacles may present themselves, no matter how many disappointments you may suffer, keep out discontent and weariness by refreshing your soul at the fountain of God's Word. Take care of, and nourish, your spiritual life. Many are so busy that they feel they have no time to provide for their soul, no time to spend in meditation. They fear that the hour spent in fellowship with their God is an hour wasted. Too busy for that sort of thing. They do not realize that the real spirit which they put into their daily work to a great degree is dependent upon that something within their frame which we call man's soul, his inner spirit-life. You will be the better fitted out for your day's work if you have started it with the Lord. You will be better fitted out for all week if you have spent that hour in prayer and worship on Sunday morning. That is not time wasted, but time well invested also for your daily vocation.

But above all, what an example of devotion and consecration Jesus has given us for our Christian profession! The great objective in the life of every Christian must be to preach the kingdom of God in this world. Therefor are we sent. And we must attune our entire life to this chief purpose of our existence. Whatever our profession, our business, our station may be, everything in the life of a Christian must serve the one great objective of our existence, to preach the kingdom of God; for thereunto are we sent into this world.

Do we lack courage and perseverance? Are we cold? Is there no fire in our soul? Let us refuel every day by spending that early morning hour with God, daily seeking and finding before the Throne of Mercy renewed life and energy for the real purpose of our existence. Just as you shake the ashes out of your furnace every morning and refill it with coal, so shake off dull sloth from your soul every morning and refill your heart with living fire from on high. And as you occasionally clean out your furnace from the accumulated soot and dirt, so let every Lord's Day be a day spent chiefly for cleaning out the accumulated dross in your soul life in order that you may get the full benefit of the fire of the Spirit of God within by worshiping the Lord in the congregation of the saints.

If we all would follow the example of the great Prophet of Nazareth, there would be a new spiritual awakening, a new spiritual fire would set the hearts of Christians ablaze even as it took hold of those disciples on the way to Emmaus, Luke 24, 32.

2.

Note secondly that Jesus does not fritter away His time nor spend His energy on secondary matters. The people came to Him and stayed Him. They tried to prevail upon Him to remain in Capernaum, not because they were so anxious to hear His message, but because they were so anxious to have their sick healed. His miracles attracted them.

Here was a man who could perform real miracles. They had brought their sick to Him the previous evening. He laid His hand on every one and healed them all. Can you imagine what that meant for those people? Think of Malden and the grave of Father Powers there. When it was noised abroad that miracles of healing were reported from there, on one Sunday 250,000 people visited that grave. And yet, that was a mere hoax. But here was One living who could really heal people. There was no doubt about the cures which this great Prophet effected. Are you surprised that people flocked to Him and begged Him to stay in their city? What would happen if Jesus were to come to our city to-day, visit our hospitals, lay His hands on the sick and heal them? People would forget everything else over their excitement. All the big news of the day would be pushed back into some obscure corner of the paper in order to give way to this greatest of all news about the Prophet who was healing the sick so miraculously.

What did Jesus do? He considered these miracles only of secondary importance. He would not stay in Capernaum and devote His precious time to healing the sick. He had something more important to do. "I must preach the kingdom of God, for therefor am I sent." No matter how important these miracles may have seemed to the people, no matter how much they attracted the attention of the people, Jesus could not give up all His time to perform miracles at the expense of preaching the kingdom of God. Preaching was His chief work. The rest He did by the way. His miracles must never grow to such an extent that He would have no time left to preach the kingdom of God. That must come first and must always remain first.

What a lesson for the Church! There is great danger indeed that in the multiplicity of our church activities we fritter away our time on secondary matters at the expense of our chief purpose. The work of the Church is to preach the kingdom of God. There are many little side-activities which also require some thought and attention. The great danger is that these side-activities will demand so much of our time and our energy that we shall have little left for our real work.

How much of the work done in many church societies is really of a secondary nature! All our social activities do not even deserve the attention which the miracles of Jesus deserved. We do not condemn them as being foreign to the work of the church; they properly find a place on the program of the church; but how careful ought we to be that we do not put so much effort and spend so much time on these minor matters, so that no time is left for the real work of the church—preaching the kingdom of God.

It is just so with many of the activities of the Church at large. Our hospitals, our orphanages, our old people's homes, much of the social service work done in our Inner Mission activities, Lutherland, Valparaiso,—they all are of minor importance when we compare them with our work of preaching Christ and Him crucified. Certainly these works should also receive our attention. They find a proper place in our church-life. But the Lord Jesus never did miracles at the expense of preaching the kingdom of God; much less should works of the Church such as I have mentioned displace preaching. When the people urged Him to stay in Capernaum to perform miracles, He did not comply with their request. He emphasized the real work for which

He had been sent into the world. Sending out missionaries, building chapels where the kingdom of God can be preached, supporting the preaching in our own church, educating the children of our church, filling the treasuries of Synod — these things must be written with large letters at the top of our church program, and they must never suffer because we have so many opportunities to do other marvelous works, which, after all, are of secondary importance.

Let us keep in mind 1 Cor. 1, 21—24 and 1 Pet. 1, 23—25. For: Rom. 10, 14—17.

Let us, then, this day dedicate ourselves anew to the great work for which we have been sent into the world and say again and again, "We must preach the kingdom of God, . . . for therefor are we sent." Amen.

Arthur Brunn.

Septuagesima.

Matt. 5, 17—19.

Text from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. This sermon not a Gospel-message of grace and eternal life for lost and condemned sinners, but a series of exhortations to disciples, children of God, to let their light shine, to do good works, that their Father in heaven may be glorified; a rule of conduct for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, delighting to do the will of their Father in heaven. This sermon not a new law to take the place of "Moses and the prophets," but a repetition and elucidation of that ancient Law setting forth the true, spiritual sense of the commandments of God, clearing away the traditional perversions and erroneous deductions and distinctions taught by scribes and Pharisees.

New Dispensation neither a reign of lawlessness nor of substitution of new code of morals differing from, or contrary to, "Moses and the prophets." For our Lord solemnly declares: Text.

Let us consider this solemn declaration: —

The Law of God Shall Not be Annulled, but Fulfilled.

1. Not annulled; *2. But fulfilled.*

1.

The Law, given by Moses and also taught by the prophets, is the holy will of God, which tells you and me as well as all other men how we are to be and what we are to do or not to do. "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt"; "for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity," etc. He has the right to give us commandments and the power to execute His threats and fulfil His promises. This is His prerogative because He is our Creator. We are in duty bound to obey His voice. If we do not do so, we are guilty, we are under the penalties and curse, we must suffer the consequences, His wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal damnation. Deut. 27, 26.

The enduring stability and perpetual immutability of this holy Law is taught by our Lord in v. 17 of our text: "I am not come to destroy," *i. e.,* to dissolve, to abrogate, to annul. He repeats: "I am not come to destroy." Jesus, Jehovah manifest in the flesh, Himself true God, who gave the Law and had authority to change and to annul the Law, did not come to abrogate, to make it void. On the contrary, He reaffirmed it, not only in the Sermon on the Mount, but also Luke 10, 25 ff.; Matt. 22, 37 ff., *et al.* Authoritatively and most emphatically He declares v. 18: "Till heaven and earth," etc. Not one jot, the smallest letter of the alphabeth, or one tittle, the little stroke by which some letters are distinguished from others like them, shall pass from the Law.

If Christ did not annul the Law and says that it shall not be annulled, dare any one presume to make invalid, or abrogate, the least of the commandments and "teach men so"? Woe unto him! He shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.,* he will be rejected and excluded from heaven, if he knowingly misleads others to disobey the voice of the Lord.

Does this solemn declaration of the Lord alarm and terrify you? Do you ask, "How can I hope to enter the kingdom of heaven if the Law, which demands perfect obedience and requires holiness in thought, word, and deed and curses every transgressor, is immutable and shall not be annulled, even in the least of its requirements? I have not kept it, I am not able to keep it. Is my case hopeless? What must I do to be saved?

2.

Christ did not come to annul the Law, but to *fulfil* it, v. 17. The Only-begotten of the Father, the Word, was made flesh, John 10. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made *under the Law,*" Gal. 4, 5. He fulfilled all righteousness, every demand and requirement of the Law, by perfect obedience. Not one of His enemies was able to convict Him of sin, John 8, 46. He was holy and undefiled and not in need of a sacrifice for Himself, for He knew no sin. He was tempted, but without sin. God Himself was well pleased with Him. He was without spot or blemish, and His whole life on earth was a perfect life of love, love of God and love of His neighbor, which is the fulfilment of the Law.

Why did Christ do this? And why, moreover, did He suffer and bleed and die as a cursed transgressor of the Law, under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God? "To redeem us from the curse of the Law," Gal. 3, 13. "To redeem them that were under the Law that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4, 5. We, who could not be justified by the Law in the sight of God, are justified by faith in Him who fulfilled the Law for us. By faith in Him we have a perfect righteousness, as though we had fulfilled the Law; we are not cursed, but are blessed children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Do we, then, make void the Law through faith? Rom. 3, 31. Far from it; yea, we establish the Law. How? Text, v. 19b. We do the commandments and teach men so and shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Though we are no longer under the Law, but under grace, we delight in the Law of God after the inward man, Rom. 7, 22. For the Law of God is holy and just and good. We are in Christ Jesus, dead to sin, but alive unto God; no longer servants of sin, but servants of righteousness; we do not live after the flesh, but, led by the Spirit of adoption, we do the will of our heavenly Father. And our new life and service of God in righteousness, though not under the dominion and demands and threats of the Law, is love of God and love of our neighbor, as revealed in the holy and good will of God, or the immutable Law. And though our obedience to the Father's will is imperfect because the flesh lusteth against the spirit, we are pleasing to God and our new life of righteousness is acceptable in His sight because we are in Christ Jesus. (Stoeckhardt, Romans 7 and 8.)

Blessed are they that delight in the Law of God.

THEO. SCHURDEL.

Sexagesima.

John 8, 25—36.

Jesus is the Light of the world, John 8, 12. He came to lead sinners out of darkness into the marvelous light of truth, freedom, and life. He does this by means of His Word, John 8, 14. 18. 20: bearing witness, teaching, speaking to, the world, v. 26.

Not all the hearers of the Word, however, come to the knowledge of the truth, v. 19. Not every one that says: "Lord, Lord," will enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 7, 21. Not every one that hears the Word and receives it with joy endures unto the end and is finally saved, Matt. 13, 20. 21. Many of those who hear the Word will die in their sins because of their unbelief, John 8, 21. 24.

All that hear the Word of Jesus should therefore heed His admonition: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"; and even those who believe in Him, v. 30, are continually in need of the exhortations and warnings and promises of His Word in order that they may be kept in faith, remain His disciples indeed. One of those blessed promises by means of which Jesus strengthens and keeps believers in faith and true discipleship is found in our text. Let us lay to heart —

The Blessed Promise of Jesus to Those who Are His Disciples Indeed.

1. *Who are the real, true disciples of Jesus?*
2. *What does Jesus promise them?*

1.

Jesus speaks, teaches, bears witness of Himself in the treasury, in that section of the Court of the Women in the Temple where the treasury chests were placed, v. 12 ff. As He spoke, "many believed on Him," v. 30. — Faith comes by hearing the Word of Jesus, also to-day. Jesus has indeed left this world, as far as His visible presence is concerned, but we hear His voice, we hear him wherever His witnesses proclaim the glorious Gospel of the kingdom. His Word is revealed to them, not in visions and dreams, but in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, 1 Pet. 1, 11; also in the apostles, His witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth, Acts 1, 8; John 15, 26. 27. All Scripture is the Word of Christ and testifies of Him. Those who believe in Him believe through the word of His messengers, to whom He gave the Word of Truth, John 17, 14. 17. 20. The Word of Jesus has lost none of its divine power. Jesus and His Spirit are with the messengers of the Gospel unto the end of the world. Many of those who now heard His Word believed in Him, v. 30.

To those who believed in Him Jesus said: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed," v. 31. Continuance in His Word the mark of true discipleship then and now. What does Jesus mean? Why does He say this to believers? Because He knows that some of those who receive His Word "endure but for a time" and then fall away, Mark 4, 16. 17. The Word alone is the power of God that produces faith, and the Word of Jesus alone is able to strengthen and to keep in faith; and therefore those only who continue in His Word are His disciples indeed.

Let us, then, continue in the words of Jesus if we would be His real, His true disciples. Let us hear it and keep it. Let us search the Scriptures. Let us ponder the words of the heavenly truth. Let us receive it in good and honest hearts. May it ever dwell among us richly, in all wisdom. Let us teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, Luke 2, 19; 10, 39; Ps. 26, 6—8; Ps. 119; Luke 11, 28; 2 Pet. 1, 19; Col. 3, 16. If we do not continue in the Word, the devil, the world, the flesh, affliction, persecution, temptations, trials, will make us stumble and extinguish the light of faith. If we continue in it, we are disciples of Jesus indeed and shall obtain the promise: —

2.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," v. 32.

Blessed promise! Knowledge of the truth and freedom! What *truth?* The truth that Jesus revealed, bearing witness, testifying of Himself, vv. 12. 18. 25. 27. The Father sent Him to do His will; God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; the God-man being lifted up, crucified, dying for the world, raised from the dead, calling sinners out of darkness into the light of life. Only Redeemer, Acts 4, 12. King of Grace and Glory, John 18, 36—38; 14, 1—6.

"Shall *know* the truth." Is not faith, and the very beginning of faith, knowledge of this truth? John 17, 3. Indeed, to believe in Jesus is knowledge of the truth. But this knowledge shall increase, disciples shall grow and attain that degree of maturity which enables them to say, in spite of all that would threaten and condemn and separate them from the love of Christ: "I am persuaded," etc., Rom. 8, 38. 39; and in spite of all cunning craftiness seeking to deceive them: Eph. 4, 13—16; Col. 1, 9—14.

"And the truth shall make you free," v. 32. From the bondage, power, and dominion of sin, vv. 33 ff. This freedom is the blessed gift of Christ to all believers from the very moment they come to Him and know Him; but like knowledge it shall be increased, growing from day to day, enabling the disciples of Christ to put on the whole armor of God, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to stand and to withstand all the power of darkness and wickedness; free, not abusing liberty, 1 Pet. 2, 16, but as the servants of God, glorifying His name, adorning the doctrine of God, our Savior, Phil. 4, 8. Freedom from the power of sin gives strength and opportunity for the glorious service of our Master.

Let us continue in His Word that we may enjoy the blessed knowledge of the truth and freedom in the Kingdom of Truth!

THEO. SCHURDEL.

Quinquagesima.

Matt. 20, 17—28.

We preach Christ Crucified, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1, 23. 24, just as St. Paul determined not to know anything among his hearers save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, 1 Cor. 2, 2. In all the seasons of the church-year we preach Him who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, Acts 4, 12.

In the holy season of Lent now approaching we preach the same Christ, meditating, however, on our Savior's Passion, *i. e.*, the history of His sufferings and death, more in detail than at other seasons of the year. We follow our Savior from Jerusalem to Gethsemane, to the high priest's palace, to the pretorium of Pontius Pilate, to Calvary. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

To-day, Sunday before Lent, preparation day. Text one of the most appropriate; parallel passages Mark 10, 32 ff. and Luke 18, 31 ff., pericopes for same Sunday, in other series for church-year. More fully than before. Christ announces His approaching death and resurrection to His disciples. Let us prayerfully consider, etc.: —

Behold the Son of Man, the Obedient Servant of the Lord!

1. He goes forth to pay the ransom for our sins.
2. He leaves us an example to follow His steps.

1.

Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way. They were amazed, they were afraid, as they followed Him, and now explicitly and more fully than before that day He announces, v. 18: The Son of Man shall be betrayed, condemned to death, delivered to the Gentiles, be mocked and scourged and crucified; all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished, Luke 18, 31. It is the will of the Lord, the eternal plan and counsel and purpose of Jehovah, and Jesus is the obedient Servant, whom God sent into the world to do His will, Is. 53.

Behold how willingly He goes forth! He knows all things that were going to befall Him, Mark 10, 32. Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha; smitten, stricken, afflicted, betrayed, bound, spit upon, mocked, falsely accused, condemned, buffeted, crowned with thorns, scourged, despised, rejected, crucified. He knows because His Spirit was in the prophets and inspired and moved them to write all these things, all these details of the bitter sufferings and death, 1 Pet. 1, 10—12. He knows because He Himself is Jehovah, God manifest in the flesh, humbling Himself that He might suffer death on the cross. Behold, a voluntary sacrifice! No other, nothing less, would have been acceptable in the sight of God. Behold, a sacrifice of Him who was true God! No other would have been sufficient and perfect. Uncomplaining, not opening His mouth to complain, as a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

Why is He sent? Why does He go forth to be obedient unto the death of the cross? Why does He who knew no sin and in whom no cause of death could be found, suffer all that unspeakable torment of body and soul and die on the accursed tree? His Spirit revealed to the prophets: "He was wounded for our transgressions," etc., Is. 53. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He shall make His soul an offering for sin." "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many," v. 28. Many? Not in contrast to "few" or to "all," but the one Son of Man for the many sinners, *i. e.,* for Jews and Gentiles, for the world, 1 John 2, 2; John 1, 29.

And behold, He finishes the work of redemption. "On the third day He shall rise again," v. 19. God accepted the sacrifice for the propitiation of the world, 1 Cor. 15, 14—20. The obedient Servant of the Lord has finished the task; we are redeemed. Let us believe and rejoice; we are reconciled and justified.

2.

He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

The ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee and their mother, vv. 20. 21. The answer of Jesus, vv. 22—28. False ideas and Jewish hopes concerning the kingdom of Christ and special places of honor to favorites, as in the kingdoms of this world. Not so in the kingdom of Christ. The only path to greatness and glory in His kingdom is through much tribulation, "drinking the bitter cup," and humble, self-denying service.

So we must follow Christ on the way, in His steps; first the sufferings and service, then the glory that shall follow. Not love of greatness, but the greatness of love. First the cross, then the crown. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together," Rom. 8, 17 ff. Humble and self-denying service here, as Matt. 25, 35—40; and when the Son of Man comes in His glory, we shall stand on His right hand and hear the blessed words: Matt. 25, 34. The apostles and martyrs were such faithful followers of Jesus.

Let us believe in Him who gave His life a ransom for us and follow His example of true greatness, obedience, and service.

O happy servant he
In such a posture found!
He shall his Lord with rapture see
And be with honor crowned.

THEO. SCHURDEL.

First Sunday in Lent, Invocavit.

Luke 4, 1—15.

The Prophet Isaiah foresaw a glad day for Galilee when he wrote: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Galilee, the Galileans, had drifted away from their brethren, had intermingled with the Gentile natives, had become strangers to God's Temple and its teachings. Spiritual darkness had spread over their minds; they had lost their Lord, who alone can cheer in the valley of the shadow of death. Isaiah, however, foresees a glad day that shall come for them. The day when "the Child" should be born whose name shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Then Galilee shall see a great light.

In the Gospel-lesson for this Sunday, in vv. 14 and 15, we have the record of this prophecy's fulfilment. "And Jesus," etc.

The Gospel-lesson, accordingly, records an event that is the fulfilment of a prophecy concerning the Christ, and it very particularly stresses the fact that Jesus in these events was led by the Spirit.

May we, then, contemplate Jesus in this first lesson in another Lenten season as the Messiah, the Christ, the One that was *anointed* by the Holy Ghost to be our Prophet, Priest, and King; the *Anointed One* whom God has sent that He should be for us a sanctuary, in whom we find salvation and safety in spite of sin! Is. 8, 14.

Let me, then, present to you

Jesus, the Anointed.

Jesus was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit —

1. In the wilderness; *2. In Galilee;*
3. In the Gospel-preaching in all the world.

1.

Jesus began His public ministry with His baptism. It was then that "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee am I well pleased," Luke 3, 22. In the beginning of to-day's Gospel-lesson we read: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness," v. 1.

a) Behold here Jesus consecrating Himself to the work that John had been preaching about and to which John gave unmistakable testimony when, pointing to Jesus, he cried: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The Father in heaven, who has made it His own business on earth to redeem fallen mankind, visibly and audibly consecrates Jesus, anoints Him with the Holy Ghost, the "Spirit of power and strength," etc.

Thus anointed, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. The lesson tells us that there he was forty days, tempted by the devil. The devil, the Tempter from the beginning, enemy of God and man, the prime cause of man's disobedience and fall, of all man's miseries and losses — the devil, whose work Jesus had come to destroy, tempts Jesus, seeks to deceive and destroy Him.

"In those days He did eat nothing." Forty days of fasting in the wilderness, forty days of temptation by the devil. And all this under the guidance of the Spirit. All this in the cause for which Jesus had been born and for which He had come into the world.

"When they were ended, He afterward hungered." The days of solemn consecration to the great work for which He had dedicated His life on earth had been victoriously completed under the guidance of the Spirit. Yet now Jesus hungered.

The devil is still at hand. The devil's power over man depends on the outcome of his battle with Jesus. It is a battle to a finish. The devil will risk everything to bring Jesus to fall. It is now or never.

b) Note the temptations of this evil spirit.

aa) V. 3. The devil tempts Jesus to use the power that was undeniably His, as the Son of God, against the Spirit that was leading Him, to enter into conflict with the divine purpose for which He had come into the world and which He was now about to fulfil. Anointed with the Holy Spirit, Jesus repels the devil saying: v. 4. Jesus and God are one; no action of His or of the Holy Spirit is at any time at variance with the whole, the complete counsel of the heavenly Father.

bb) Vv. 5—7. "All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them." The devil offers an exchange of power and of glory. Instead of the power of the Spirit and its glory the power and the glory of the world, such as it is under the charming, but deceitful spell of the devil. "If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine." Liar from the beginning. The earth is the Lord's; it belongs to Jesus, by whom all things were made, John 1. Jesus is the only absolute Owner of it. Moreover, "the earth hath He given to the children of men," Ps. 115, 16. It is man's to subdue it and to rule over it under the Lord over all. Whatever the devil holds under his baneful sway he has stolen from man and from the Lord and must give an account for it. Small wonder that Jesus answered him: v. 8. Satan means gainsayer, contradicter; he gainsays the truth, he lies. He is not fit to stand before the Lord, before the truth. The truth can have no respect for the lie; the Lord could never worship the devil. There is only one worthy of worship, the Lord.

cc) Vv. 9—12. The devil quotes Scripture to suit his purpose. He garbles it. Here he omits the important words "in all thy ways." Neither God's nor angel's presence or watch is promised us upon the devil's ways. That blessing is promised only on the condition clearly laid down in the First Psalm, the condition that the child of God remain upon his own legitimate ways. Then, no matter how perilous those ways may be, the Lord is with him, and His angels watch over, and protect, him. To look to God for protection on the devil's ways is tempting God pure and simple.

Thus ended the temptation, and the devil left Jesus *for a season.* The evil spirit could not prevail against Him who was *anointed* with the Holy Spirit. That power was too great for the evil spirit, the devil. The Son of God, anointed by God the Father with God the Holy Spirit, living by every word of God, in the power of the Spirit that filled Him, and speaking the words of the Spirit given by inspiration of God, resists the devil, the evil spirit, and defeats him.

2.

Vv. 14 and 15. From the wilderness of Judea, Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit." He came speaking with the authority that was His; in His own power, anointed of God with the Holy Ghost, He did the works of God. Never was man like Him. His fame went out quickly. He taught in their synagogs. They glorified Him. The glorious prophecy of Isaiah had gone into fulfilment; Galilee saw a great light, the Light of the world, the Light that scatters the darkness of mind and heart and soul, that reveals truth and life and hope. Galilee saw the Anointed One, who worked and lived not by bread alone, but by every word of God. Galilee saw the Anointed One, who came to bear witness unto the truth; who is the King, the real King of heaven and earth, by creation, redemption, and sanctification; who alone is worthy to be worshiped now and forever, the Vanquisher of the devil. Galilee saw the Anointed One, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Phil. 2, but was obedient unto death; who has a name above every name, Jesus, Savior. Galilee saw Him who fulfilled every promise made by God through His prophets, who did His heavenly Father's will, and who teaches us how to do the will of God and how to walk in His ways under Heaven's protection, as angels' charges.

3.

The risen Savior, when about to ascend into heaven, said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel unto every creature." "And, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." True to His promise, the Anointed One went with His Word and His disciples.

Peter under the power of the Spirit of God proclaimed the Gospel of the Anointed One and found Him with himself on that great Pentecost Day to establish the Christian Church at Jerusalem.

Sent by the Spirit down to Caesarea to Cornelius, he bears testimony to the Anointed One and to His power, saying: "The Word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power," Acts 10, 37—38.

So down through the ages: 1 Cor. 1, 22. 23; 2 Cor. 4, 5.

So to-day. The Gospel has not lost its power. It has the power of Jesus whom it preaches, Rom. 1, 16. With this power it still overcomes the devil, sin, and all its consequences. With this power it still teaches not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God; with this power it still teaches not to love the world, but to love God and worship Him; with this power it still teaches not to walk in the ways of sin and apart from God, but in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, having the assurance that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is ever with us and that angels watch over us and protect and serve us.

What a blessed Lent is that which contemplates this great Anointed One, Jesus, anointed of God to be our Prophet, Priest, and King! H. B. HEMMETER.

Second Sunday in Lent, Reminiscere.

John 12, 20—26.

Lent commemorates the suffering of our Savior. During Lent Christians everywhere in mind and in spirit enter into the closest fellowship with Jesus. Looking forward to the end of His earthly ministry, they think and speak of His crucifixion, death, and His resurrection, by which He delivered the world from sin's final consequence and proclaimed to it life and immortality. Yes, during Lent Christians are preparing properly to celebrate Easter, their victory over sin, death, and the devil.

In order that we may properly celebrate Easter and its victory, we must see Jesus, know Him and His work, His important personality and His all-concerning accomplishment.

The Christian demand at this season therefore is identical with that of the Greeks of our Gospel-lesson, who, coming to Philip, said: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Let us emphasize this fact then as we consider: —

The Christians' Lenten Demand, "We Would See Jesus."

1. Jesus Himself, in His reality, His fulness.

During Lent, and really at all times, "we would see Jesus" Himself. Not some one's picture of Jesus, not some one's thoughts about Jesus, no matter how pious they all may be.

Where can we find Him? Jesus, especially during the days in which He was walking here on earth "with His face set as a flint" toward Jerusalem and His cross, again and again reminded His disciples that all that was being done before their eyes was being done in order that *Scripture* might be fulfilled. In the Scriptures therefore do we find the picture of Jesus that we would see; there are the thoughts that we would have engage our minds. There is Jesus Himself, both in prophecy and in fulfilment.

Strange as it must seem, there is a wide-spread tendency in our days to see Jesus not as He is pictured in the Scriptures. In large circles that picture is deliberately rejected. Even in nominally Christian churches they say that there is no need to burden oneself with the detail of the gospels about Jesus; and that Jesus, if He Himself were with us to-day would not have us to be interested so much in His person, His wonderful deeds, His particular work, but that the all-important matter to Him would be this, that we imbibe His spirit and live His life. Accordingly, these nominally Christian teachers avoid the gospel records and the Jesus that they picture and invent another Jesus than the One that has come to us in Sacred Writ.

The thoughtful Christian will not fail to detect the variance of such false prophets in sheeps' clothing from the Jesus who has called

Himself the Good Shepherd. This Good Shepherd Himself has said: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of Me." The thoughtful Christian will therefore not permit Himself to be led away from the Scriptures in His search for Jesus Himself; for in the Bible he knows he will find Jesus in His reality and in His fulness.

In the Scriptures, then, we want to see Jesus. We want to see Him both in prophecy and in fulfilment; for Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of Scripture. Deep down and everywhere He lies bedded in the Old Testament prophecies; the New Testament reveals Him in all His fulness and glory.

We want to see Jesus especially with reference to the great fundamental facts that have been gathered and laid down in the Second Article of the Christian Church's Creed. Jesus Christ, God's Son, Mary's Son, our Lord, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, dead and buried, descended into hell, on the third day risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, from thence He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. We want to see Jesus in that reality and fulness to which He refers in the Gospel-lesson for this Sunday, our text, saying: "The hour is come that the Son of Man is glorified," v. 23. Yes, especially do we want to see Him in His suffering and death, in which He gives His life in order that we may live. O the glory that streams from Jesus' cross! In it the Father, who *so loved* the world that He gave His only-begotten Son; in it the Son, who in love became obedient unto death, are revealed in appealing and overwhelming splendor.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
  That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
  Demands my soul, my life, my all.

2. We, every one for himself and all together.

During Lent, and indeed at all times, "we would see Jesus," every one for himself. Our religion is, after all, a very personal matter. It concerns us individually. It is a matter between God and each one of us singly.

Jesus has indeed once and for all times redeemed the whole world from its sin by His representative atonement on Calvary. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He has done it, He has finished the work. The whole world is redeemed.

However, this finished work must be preached, made known to the individual; and he that believeth, he shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. This finished work is offered to the individual in the Word that the Scriptures and its preachers proclaim, and it becomes a very personal matter then; the individual must accept the offered grace, he must believe.

Also the increase of faith is a personal matter. No one's faith can increase by another's application. It is always in proportion to our own spiritual sight.

The Christian Lenten demand therefore very properly is, We, that is, I myself, would see Jesus. Lent is a precious time of personal application to the review and the study of the Scriptures, of personal devotion in regular contemplation of Jesus and His love, His words, and His Passion. Let us use it, saying, "We would see Jesus."

But we would also see Jesus in company with others. Like these Greeks, we have companions, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, of like mind with us. The common spiritual interests bind us together, and we would see Jesus in company, in the assemblings of ourselves together.

What solemn memories are bound together in the lives of Christians with the "sweet hours of prayer," when in one way or another the Spirit descended upon all those that were gathered together like those disciples on that first Pentecost! The Savior's solemn "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," has never been a vain word. In accord therewith, the rivers of strength have gone out into and through the groupings of Jesus' disciples, so that the gates of hell have not prevailed against His Church. O let us not overlook or minimize the fact that "faith cometh by hearing." The regular and the special service that preaches Jesus, reveals Him, and there is the place for all of us also that would see Jesus and ever more and more of Him. 1 Cor. 1, 21; Rom. 10, 17.

Yes, we would see Jesus during this Lenten season all the time and even to the end in the company of our Christian brethren and friends; in the place where Jesus has promised to be with us and to reveal Himself. For in that sight of Jesus there is salvation. Is. 52, 10; 45, 22.

So shall we prepare for Easter. Seeing Jesus, seeing Him every one for himself, and all of us together, Jesus' victory shall be ours.

H. B. HEMMETER.

Third Sunday in Lent, Oculi.

John 2, 13—25.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the Jews' Passover. It was the Jews' Easter, commemorating the deliverance from the angel of death and out of Egypt's bondage. The pious Israelite, if possible, journeyed to Jerusalem and to the Temple for that high festival. Jesus' parents, accordingly, went every year up to Jerusalem. It was also the custom of Jesus.

Our Easter commemorates the fulfilment of all that of which the Old Testament Passover was a type. We, too, have an Easter

Lamb, Jesus Christ, offered for us. Lent commemorates the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. It commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus, by the sprinkling of whose blood we, too, are delivered from death and out of the bondage of sin. And it leads on to Easter, which proclaims the accomplished fact, the victory unto life, given unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pious Christians, in mind and in spirit, during Lent also go up to Jerusalem. Christ, their Passover, is continually before their eyes during this season as they prepare for the Easter Feast. It is their constant longing to see more and more of Jesus.

It is therefore also of supreme interest to the Christian to know the mind of Jesus as He attended the Jews' Passover, as it is revealed, for instance, in the Gospel-lesson for this Sunday. On its basis let us consider: —

The Mind of Jesus Attending the Passover.

1. As to the Temple.

In the Gospel we read: vv. 13 to 17.

The Temple, accordingly, in the mind of Jesus is His Father's house. The house dedicated to God, the Father of us all and, in the specific Biblical sense, of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the house dedicated to the heavenly Father's uses, the place where He enters into communion with man, where His law and His testimonies are delivered, preserved, and revealed. It is the house, according to the Savior's own words to His astonished parents when they found Him in the Temple both hearing and asking questions in the midst of the teachers there, *where He was about His heavenly Father's business.* There the great business of God with man and for man is officially carried on.

Is it any wonder that His zeal for that house was outraged to see that house used as described in our text? Is it any wonder that He proceeded at once to purge the Temple of such sacrilege? Did not the business of these men, out after pecuniary gain, relegate into the background the real business of the place? Did it not protrude into the foreground that which was properly only incidental in the matter of divine worship? Yes, indeed; this bartering for gain in dealing in the things that belonged only to the outward form of worship had changed the very mind of the people, until they found their main interest in the purchasing of the typical thing, in the outward acts, until the Temple had become in reality a house of merchandise. It was no longer really a house of prayer, a place where man worshiped in spirit and in truth, where the lost child returns to its heavenly Father and finds pardon for erring and rest for its yearning soul.

Jesus was aroused by this abuse of God's house and cleansed it of its shame. Jesus restored the Temple for its proper uses.

With our minds turned toward the coming Passover, toward Good Friday and Easter, we, too, in the likeness of Jesus look to the Church as God's house, the place where His honor dwelleth. In it we look for and after the heavenly Father's business, that great and all-important business which He has attended to in the incarnation and the sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, the business that Jesus finished by his death and resurrection. Such is our Lenten mind, the mind of Jesus as to the Temple.

2. As to Himself.

In the Gospel-lesson we read: vv. 18 to 22.

Our lesson makes reference to the first Passover after Jesus' entry on His public ministry. It was on the third Passover after this that Jesus was crucified. And yet here, three years before His crucifixion, Jesus, going up to Jerusalem to the Passover, speaks prophetically of that Passover to which the Passovers of the Old Testament all referred. Jesus speaks here of the destroying and the resurrection of His body. His mind is on it.

It is all true of Him what is said in the Second Psalm. Jesus is God's Holy One whom God has set upon His holy hill of Zion. No one can succeed against Him or harm His cause. Forever it will be the holy singers' boast: "Why do the heathen rage?" etc.

Yet it is also true that "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter." He is the despised and the rejected of men. "He was wounded for our transgressions." "By His stripes we are healed." Is. 53.

This, the heavenly Father's real business on earth, Jesus had come to carry out, and it is on His mind as He attends the Passover at Jerusalem, three years before that event.

Mark the text.

When Jesus had assumed the authority to cleanse the Temple, the Jews asked Him for His credentials for such action. They asked Him to show that He had a right so to interfere in the place that He had called His Father's house. Jesus refers them to His death and resurrection. That was to be to them the sign that they asked. By it they should learn to know that Jesus had authority in that Temple. Accordingly He tells them: "Destroy this temple," speaking of the temple of His body, "and in three days I will raise it up." Surely a stupendous sign; one that is worthy of credence, the sure proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Anointed One, of whom Moses and the prophets spake, the Glory of God's Temple and of God's people Israel.

Such is the mind of Jesus attending the Passover, and such should properly be also our mind as we prepare for Easter. Jesus "destroyed," Jesus delivered unto Pontius Pilate, crucified and buried, and on the third day risen again, that is the burden of our thoughts. Contemplating these things, wondering at this great sign, we attend the feast, we commemorate the Passover, our Passover, and experience the strengthening of our faith.

3. As to ourselves.

In the Gospel we read: vv. 23—25.

What an inglorious picture of man is here! And it is true to the facts. And Jesus knew it all better than we are ever able to understand ourselves. Just think: Jesus, on earth because of the love that sacrifices itself for man, did not commit Himself unto man, because He knew all men, knew what was in man.

Altogether untrustworthy, that is man. O how true! He cannot be trusted in the high matters that Jesus has to deal with for man's salvation.

Jesus was mindful of this fact when He was attending the Passover particularly. Oh, that this mind may also be in us! Let us not trust in ourselves in dealing with the solemn and sublime subjects and thoughts that center about our Passover, our Lent and our Easter. Let us not trust in ourselves for either the observance of the feast or the profitable use of it. Rather, let us fix our attention on Jesus, ever mindful of our own unworthiness. Let us put all our trust in Him.

H. B. HEMMETER.

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Laetare.

John 11, 46—57.

One of the most intensely interesting narratives of the Old Testament is that of Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob. Who of us has not been moved to indignation against Joseph's wicked brothers when we read of their cruelty towards that poor boy, their lies, their treachery, etc. Who has not pitied him when he was accused by that lewd and deceitful woman, Potiphar's wife? Who has not rejoiced at Joseph's rescue and advancement? Tears have started when we read how he wept at the sight of his brothers, so distressed and humiliated before him, and when he saw his beloved brother Benjamin.

There are no more-fitting words to describe the life of that man Joseph than the words in which he himself summarized it all: "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."

But the story of Joseph, beautiful as it is in itself, is not of chief importance because of Joseph, but because of Jesus, of whom Joseph is only a type. Here in our text we have the fulfilment of what Joseph's story simply typified. Here we see Him who could say to all His enemies: "Ye thought evil against Me, but God meant it unto good."

Jesus Saying to His Enemies: —

1. Ye Thought Evil against Me; 2. God Meant It unto Good.

1.

a) The enemies of our Lord hated Him in spite of His goodness and of His good works; aye, the more good He did, the more truth He spoke, the more bitter became the malice of their hearts against Him. In the verse preceding our text we are told how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. What a wonderful work! Should not every Israelite have come to this Man and acclaimed Him the Savior whom God had sent to His people? John 14, 11. But instead of that they are filled with jealous rage, John 10, 32.

Such wickedness is satanic. Jesus therefore also told them that they were of their father, the devil. The old Serpent, Rev. 12, 9, has ever sought the Seed of the woman; enmity against Christ and against His flock and against His truth has always been just that wicked and satanic; *e. g.,* the poor Jewish children down in Egypt and the infants of Bethlehem under Herod. The early Christians, the *auto da fé* at the time of the Inquisition.

And though to-day open acts of violence are not so common, yet insidiously, under cover and slyly, the enemies are still at work undermining faith and morals. Modernism in the churches, religious indifference among the masses, scoffing, and impurity in popular literature are but symptoms of the hatred against Jesus and against His Church. And does not the Church of Christ to-day do good and speak truth? Is it not preaching the Bible? Is it not feeding the poor? Is it not helping the orphan? Is it not leading and protecting the young, is it not heeding the temporal and spiritual need of the child? What is it receiving therefor? "Ye thought evil against me."

b) The evil thoughts which filled His enemies burst forth into *accusations against Him.* They prophesy all manner of harm that is to follow His activity. V. 48: "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Enmity against Christ cloaks itself in the beautiful apparel of patriotism and love of the masses. These men declare that they must protect their people against this deceiver, that they must defend their nation and their country against this traitor. Pharaoh of old declared concerning the Israelites that they would multiply and, if any war were to fall out, they would join with his enemies, Ex. 1, 10. He declared it was his duty to exterminate this hateful seed. At the time of Jesus' birth, Herod was actuated by the same fear of the loss of his kingdom. The heathen Romans declared that the Christians were the cause of the downfall of the Roman empire. At the time of the Reformation, Luther was condemned as an enemy of the government.

And so it is to-day. The Christian Church, although it is the very mother of all proper education, is denounced as an enemy of enlightenment. Because faithful teachers will not suffer false doctrine, they are reviled as narrow-minded bigots, their exclusiveness is ridiculed. The evil thoughts break forth in lying accusations.

c) But these evil thoughts not only express themselves in words, *the enemies of Christ proceed to deeds.* One of their number declares that it is necessary for the people's good that this Man should die. He spoke this because of his murderous, bloodthirsty hatred against the Savior, and in v. 57 the Pharisees gave commandment that whoever knew of His whereabouts should betray Him, so that they might take Him.

It has ever been thus. Where it was possible, the foes of Christ sought the very life of the flock of Christ. Abel died as a martyr of Christ. Moses, David, Joash, had to flee for their lives. Jesus Himself was nailed to the cross. Every one of His disciples, as far as we know, with the exception of John, died by the hand of the persecutor. Thousands upon thousands of the disciples of Christ have sealed their testimony with their blood. And to this day the lives of the true Christians are embittered by violent persecution. Behold, then, what evil thoughts the enemies of Christ have against Him and His flock. Oh, we are hated! The old Serpent is ever ready to strike. The enemies are thinking, they are planning, they are conspiring, they are plotting evil, against the Church. It is a bitter struggle that is appointed to us, even as Jesus foretold, John 16, 20; Matt. 10, 16—25. Evil thoughts, lying accusations, bloody persecutions, that is what we must expect. What bitter tears have been shed, what wailing has been heard, even as Rachel wept for her children! No human history can record all the sorrow that the evil thoughts against Christ have caused. But in spite of all this we have no reason to despair, but every reason to rejoice, for Jesus can say to all His foes: "God meant it unto good."

2.

While the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed, He that sitteth in the heavens and is over all things laughed; for by His omnipotence He controlled all the rage of the enemies in such a way that thereby Jesus was glorified and His little flock gained the final victory.

a) Notice that here in our text, while the enemies are expressing their hatred against Jesus, they make this confession: "What do we? For this Man doeth many miracles," v. 47. Just so Nicodemus had to confess, John 3, 2. What a testimony that is for Jesus *out of the mouth of His very enemies!* They say that which strengthens our faith: "This Man doeth many miracles." And they were eye-witnesses and would gladly have disproved it if they could, but they were forced to admit His power.

Just so at the time when the publicans and sinners gathered about Jesus, His enemies declared: "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." They said this in order to slander Him as a companion of wicked and lewd persons. But what have they done? The Christian Church has taken up this very word from the mouth of the enemies and made of it one of its most beautiful hymns: "Jesus sinners doth receive."

Thus it was at the crucifixion, Matt. 27, 42: "He saved others," etc. And again John 10, 11. From their mouth we have the statement: "Thou makest Thyself God."

What does this high priest say? "It is expedient," etc., v. 51. While He was counseling the death of Jesus, he was forced to prophesy salvation through Jesus' suffering.

b) So it has ever been. The enmity and malice of the foes have worked together for the salvation of God's people. Cain slew Abel, but Abel is still speaking, Heb. 11, 4. Pharaoh persecuted the Jews, and this helped them to gain the Promised Land. Saul persecuted David, and this typified the persecution of the great Son of David, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. It is just so to-day. It is true, we cannot understand and see God's ways beforehand. But "what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," John 13, 7. Certain it is that that same Word which has not passed away, Luke 21, 33, and that Church which the gates of hell have not vanquished, will endure now also and gain the victory in the end. Let us not be as the Emmaus disciples, who thought all was lost, whereas Jesus told them: "O fools and slow of heart to believe," etc., Luke 24, 25. 26. Balaam was hired to curse Israel, but was forced to give us those beautiful prophecies: Num. 23, 23 and 24, 17.

c) And what is true here of Jesus and His flock is true of every Christian. You, my dear Christian, who are experiencing the enmity of the world, who are passing under the wrath of God, who are walking through the dark valley of discouragement, who are bearing a burden that is well-nigh too heavy for you, be sure the devil and your foes have evil thoughts against you, they mean you ill, they will cause you to endure the suffering which must be a portion of every child of God, Heb. 12, 6; Col. 1, 24. But remember there is One sitting in the heavens. He will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able, 1 Cor. 10, 13. You can say with St. Paul: Rom. 8, 18.

Hold on, faint heart, in thy believing!
The steadfast only wins the crown;
He who, when stormy waves are heaving,
Parts with his anchor shall go down;
But he who Jesus holds through all
Shall stand though earth and heaven should fall.

Hold out! There comes an end to sorrow;
Hope from the dust shall conquering rise;
The storm foretells a sunnier morrow;
The cross points on to paradise.
The Father reigneth; cease all doubt;
Hold on, faint heart, hold on, hold out!

S.

Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica.

John 12, 27—36.

Jesus lived His whole life in the shadow of the cross. He knew what was confronting Him. He realized very deeply all that was approaching: suffering, disgrace, humiliation, and distress. When He was fasting in the desert, Satan tried to deflect His footsteps from the way of the cross into a path that would take Him to riches, to glory, to honor and renown. We dare not think that the distress which Jesus felt when He thought of what was before Him was without sting and torture simply because He was omniscient. He was truly human and more sensitive to evil than we are. He sighed when He touched the ear of the deaf and dumb, because His sympathies were aroused to the utmost by the suffering consequent upon sin. He wept over Jerusalem. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He fell to the ground in Gethsemane. He exclaimed: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Not only when He was crucified, not only when He was lashed by soldiers, not only when He bore His cross, but during all His life, whenever the shadow of the cross became dark, His soul entered into gloom. We have a case of this right here in our text, where He states: "Now is My soul troubled." Troubled His soul was, troubled with worse trouble than we have ever experienced, troubled with utmost distress, beset by satanic powers, overwhelmed with sorrow because of the sin of the world, troubled because of that tremendous burden, heavier than any one has ever borne. It was the shadow of the cross, it was hell and the armies of hell which were approaching. Never was there such conflict in the soul of man as here in Jesus when He said: "Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." Oh, there was a darkness in that suffering of Jesus beyond all other darkness. There was a repelling force in that threatening cross, something that could frighten the most stalwart heart! But thanks be to God! Jesus conquered the woe of His own soul. How did He do it? The Father showed Him the light and the magnetism of the cross. And right therein lies our victory, our salvation. All the rest of our text speaks of this, and of that we are going to speak, imploring God's Holy Spirit to make this meditation effective in our soul.

The Light and the Magnetism of the Cross.

1. Its light; *2. Its magnetism.*

1.

a) In order to appreciate the light of the cross, we must first of all know something of the darkness and the mystery which that light is illuminating.

We may not always be conscious of it, but sooner or later every one becomes conscious of it to a certain degree. There is a terrible darkness in this world and a terrible mystery. It is the mystery of sin, suffering, and death. Some would make light of these things, talk of them as if they could be easily avoided; but they are the very ones who go down into despair when they begin to realize, even in a measure, *how dark* the sin and suffering and death of this world is.

"Fools make a mock at sin," Prov. 14, 9. The best people on this earth are in constant conflict with sin, groaning because of its assaults, Rom. 7, 24, smarting under a deep sense of guilt, Ps. 32, 3. 4. And those who are not thus groaning, and smarting, and praying, and repenting with tears, Matt. 26, 75, but are laughing and walking the ways of sin, are the ones who are standing in slippery places, Ps. 73, 18, and they will soon be brought to desolation as in a moment. They will be consumed with terrors. Woe unto the uttermost will come upon them. They are even now on the road to that place where their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.

Oh, the darkness of sin, the misery of our warfare with it, the terror of its slavery, the woe of its curse! Even in this world our prisons and asylums, our hospitals, together with their deformed and demented inmates, young and old, are a terrifying testimony to the darkness of sin.

And then, there is the *suffering* of this world, caused directly by our own sin or by the sin of those who have gone before us or by the sin of those who live with us. Why should I begin to describe that of which you all know and the very danger of which is such that it can make any one of us miserable every day of our lives? Why do mothers plead that they may live till their children have grown up? "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," Job 5, 7. There is agony of mind that has driven reason from its throne and peace from the heart. There is hunger and thirst, pains and ills for every nerve in our bodies. Oh, the darkness of the suffering, the mystery of it all!

And there is death, sometimes called the "king of terrors." Every one of us knows that whatever of material things we gain in this world finally death will take from us. And who has found a remedy? They who die young are mourned because their sun set before it had reached its zenith, and they who become old are a pitiful spectacle to all who behold them. The dread of it is upon us every hour. "There is but one step between me and death," 1 Sam. 20, 3. We teach our little children to pray: "If I should die before I wake," etc. The very uncertainty of it all is a part of its darkness and mystery and gloom. The darkness and sorrow of it all has driven thousands to despair and to contempt for life.

b) But for all this darkness there is the light of which our text speaks — the light of the cross of Christ. Jesus here speaks of His being lifted up from the earth. He speaks of His crucifixion, and in connection with this He tells the people: "A little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light. Believe in the light." He was pointing them to the light of the cross. It illuminates the darkness of sin of which we spoke; for through the cross, Christ took away the guilt, the punishment, and the dominion of sin, and through the Word of the cross He bestows upon sinful men the pardon, forgiveness, freedom from the punishment of sin, and power to fight against, and conquer, sin. Oh, what a splendor of light the Christians have in the cross of Christ! It was this very light which cheered Jesus when He was in gloom, for the Father said to Him: "I have both glorified it [His name] and will glorify it again."

Has this light dispelled the gloom of your sin? Is. 1, 18. Learn to say: Hymn 95, 1.

And the cross illuminates the suffering of this world. We Christians know that whatever our suffering is, the curse is not in it. Jesus bore that for us. Whatever suffering we must endure, in the light of the cross we learn that it is but chastisement, or that it is but a trial, and we learn to rejoice in suffering for Jesus' sake, Acts 5, 41. Or whether it be that suffering which must be endured as members of the mystical body of Christ, Col. 1, 24, or whether it be the chastisement which we receive as children and which shows the loving care which God bestows upon our training, we can bear all while faith clings to the Cross. It is the cross which teaches us to say with St. Paul: Rom. 8, 18.

And the light of the Cross illuminates death, for through the cross of Christ we know that we are delivered from death. 2 Tim. 1, 10. Through the light of the Cross we learn of the resurrection and learn to say: 1 Cor. 15, 55. 57.

What a splendor of light the Cross sheds in the darkness of this world! The prince of darkness is put to flight; sin's guilt and curse vanish. Suffering becomes sowing in tears that we may soon reap with joy. Death becomes the gateway into the many mansions that Jesus has gone to prepare for us. Hymn 95, 4.

Are you living in this light of the Cross, or are you foolishly and wickedly excluding it from your life and living in the darkness that is certainly all about us? Are you helping to let this light shed its luster into the lives of others, or are you carelessly permitting them to go on in the darkness of despair? Hymn 474, 3.

2.

But there is something else about the Cross that brought joy to the heart of Jesus and must bring joy and gladness to us. That is its *magnetism*. The Father reminded Jesus of that.

a) In our text Jesus declares, v. 32: "And I, if I be lifted up," etc. There is need of such a power to draw us away from our own folly, sin, and destruction, for there are terrible powers of evil that hold man captive. The Bible calls the prince of this world "a strong man armed," Luke 11, 21, and Paul declares: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. 6, 12. He uses these terms to impress us with the fact that the powers of darkness are not insignificant, but are far superior to our flesh and blood, wherefore Luther also declares in this battle against darkness: —

With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected.

Haven't you heard of people being held in the bondage of sin and of bad habits? Do not many of them confess that they are helplessly lost because an evil power obsesses them? Have you not felt the power of sin? Do not some poor desperate persons take hold of the most ridiculous superstitions and follies in order to receive some help against the powers of darkness?

Oh, for some magnet to draw men away from their own wickedness, sin, and guilt! Where is there a power that will draw us unto God and unto holiness?

b) Here it is in the cross of Christ. That is the magnet of which Jesus says: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

When Jesus is lifted up, that is, when His name is proclaimed, His crucifixion, His death for sin, in other words, when the Gospel is preached, then the Word of the Cross exerts power, 1 Cor. 1, 23. 24. That is what drew Paul away from his violent hatred and persecution, drew him to Christ, and made out of the wolf the lamb. That is what drew Peter from the gulf of iniquity into which his sin had cast him and placed his feet upon a rock and led him in the way everlasting. That is what drew David away from his filth and shame and drew him again unto holiness till his heart was filled with godliness and his lips began to speak the praise of the Lord. Throughout all these centuries the cross of Christ has drawn all men unto it. True, some flee from it, some oppose it, some ridicule it, but there are always many who rejoice to be drawn to the Cross and led in the path of righteousness, away from error: Moses, Heb. 11, 24—26; Rahab; Ruth; St. Augustine.

Therefore we pray:

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.

Therefore we pray: Hymn 194, 1; Hymn 201, 9. 10. It is because by looking at the cross and seeing what it means (John 3, 16) we are drawn away from the folly, the wickedness, and the filth of this world, and we are drawn to the fountain where we are washed from every guilty stain, and we are drawn to walk in the paths of holiness. Therefore we pray also: Hymn 234, 1. 3.

Is this magnet drawing you? Has it drawn you? It is the only power that can draw us to God and to heaven. Be sure that you daily consider it, look upon it, so that through its magnetism you may be drawn there where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. S.

Palm Sunday (Confirmation).

John 3, 22—36.

(See *Magazin*, Vol. 53, p. 81.)

A confession you are about to make, a vow which you made in your infancy by your sponsors you are to renew and confirm.

Having received the necessary instruction, you have learned to know it as a good confession, a worth-while vow, the grandest and most glorious pledge conceivable, a confession, vow, and pledge to the Triune God and His Word and His cause.

Therefore you should surely be congratulated upon your resolve, and you should be encouraged joyfully to make and faithfully to keep your vow. I shall do just that by presenting to you the man of whom our text speaks: —

John the Baptist, the Exemplary Confessor.

1. *He gave all honor to God.*
2. *He trusted solely in Jesus as his Savior.*
3. *He regarded the Word of God as his only guide.*
4. *He sought to serve Christ alone.*

1.

John had been preaching and baptizing with extraordinary success at the river Jordan. From Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about people had flocked to him and were so impressed with his preaching that they were questioning among themselves whether he might not be the Promised One; and the Sanhedrin had sent a delegation to him with the question, "Who art thou?" Elias, the prophet, the Christ? He had also baptized Jesus and pointed to Him as the real Paschal Lamb, promised and prefigured.

Thereupon Jesus Himself, after He had been tempted by Satan, had entered upon His ministry and commenced to preach and had commissioned His disciples to baptize the converts in His name. And His popularity waxed quickly, and John's star began to wane, and the people more and more turned away from John to Jesus. John's disciples, noting this, were both saddened and peeved, and with ill-hidden envy they came to John, complaining, "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him." Note that they call John "Rabbi," but not Jesus. They not even mention His name, but merely refer to Him as that one who had been with their master at the Jordan as one of his converts and by right should have considered himself beholden to John, but who now is stealing John's fire and putting their master in the shade. They are indignant and expect John to be in the same frame of mind. They virtually suggest to him to take steps toward regaining his prestige and to put Jesus where He belongs.

How did this affect John? To be sure, he was not immune to similar thoughts and feelings. He had the same human heart as his disciples and as you and I have, a heart that loves to have the ego exalted and ever is envious of the success of others. But he fought and conquered the temptation by reminding himself as well as his disciples that that of which they complained was in no wise to be censured and criticized, but was just what was to be expected and desired, the normal and right thing, and he gladly acknowledged the superiority of Jesus and admonished his disciples likewise to flock to Him and follow Him.

He said to them: "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." God in heaven is the Giver of every good gift. Whatever we have and receive, is from Him, "and He divideth to every man severally as He will." "What hast thou," O man, "that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. 4, 7. The same is true with whatever success we enjoy in our work. It is God's blessing. "Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

"Not unto us, but unto Thee, O Lord, be glory," let that be the sentiment, my dear children, by which you, too, are guided. Do not seek your own glory, but the glory of God, in whatever you undertake or do. Chief of all, sing solely the praise and honor of God when it comes to the question who deserves credit and glory for your salvation. Say with Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am," and let your daily prayer be the petition of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

2.

In the second place, John accepted Jesus as his Savior and the only Savior of the world. He said: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Baptist did not share the modern notion of the universal fatherhood of God; he held that only he who has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, who by faith is united with Christ and has been made partaker of His blood-redemption, is by and through the Son the beloved child of God the Father. Without Christ, God is a consuming fire of holiness; without Christ the wrath of God is and abides on us. John was persuaded that there is salvation in none other than Jesus Christ. He hoped to be saved by Jesus' blood and righteousness; he gloried in Him who would be crucified for all sinners and confessed Him to friend and foe. "Behold the Lamb of God," etc. "He must increase, but I must decrease"; and the more He increases in me, the more the Old Adam will be drowned and downed and the new man come forth, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Therefore all my strength shall be used and consumed in making His name glorious among men and persuading people to accept Him as their Savior and serve Him as their King.

Children, you, too, have learned to pray and confess, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God . . . His innocent suffering and death."

Continue in that confession unto the end, and you, too, will "live under Him in His kingdom . . . in everlasting righteousness. . . . This is most certainly true."

3.

In the third place, John accepted and confessed the Word of Christ as God's own Word and truth, satisfied that Jesus was the Son of the living God. And in all his teachings and doings he was guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even as Jesus testified of that which He had seen in the bosom of the Father, whence He came, so John received the testimony of Jesus and proclaimed it to others as God's infallible truth.

Children, you, too, have learned that same Word and testimony of Jesus, the Word of Truth, as recorded in the sacred writings of the apostles and evangelists, who were especially enlightened and inspired by the Spirit of Christ Jesus. As the Corinthians from Paul, so you have through me, your pastor, received it, not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the Word of God. Abide by it and in no wise depart from it. Uphold every doctrine there revealed, no matter what your own reason may think or how your own flesh may feel about it or what others, unchristians and would-be Christians, say and teach or doubt and deny. Remember that Jesus Himself said: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall," etc. And live accordingly and be ready to make every sacrifice in order to do so, yea, suffer everything, even death, as did John the Baptist, who suffered martyrdom because of his sincere and frank confession, rather than fall away from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus and lose your soul.

4.

Finally, John as confessor is an exemplar also in this, that he served Christ with holy zeal. That was his one and only concern, that Christ's cause, influence, and kingdom might prosper and grow. "He must increase, but I must decrease." He is the Bridegroom, I am His friend. It is the business of the "friend," the best man at a wedding, to serve the groom and the bride, to arrange matters and manage things so that their wedding may be a glorious success. It is not for him to shine and get his comfort and ease. — Christ is the Groom, and His Church is the bride. To prepare the way for them and have their needs and comfort attended to is the business and work of the friend.

That was John's ambition and aim, to prepare the way for Jesus and His kingdom and to prepare the bride for Him by converting souls to the Lover of souls.

Let that also be your concern, children, to serve Christ and His Church. Be faithful brides of the Groom. Keep yourselves pure and unspotted. And as His friends be faithfully busy inviting others to the bridal feast that His house may be filled. To-day you are admitted to full communicant membership in His Church. Be and ever remain active members of the Church; work for Christ and His Church, support His cause and help to spread His kingdom far and wide.

Thank God for having led you into the Lutheran Church. This Church is the true visible Church on earth. It gives all glory to God; praises and confesses Jesus as the only Savior; accepts the Word of Christ as revealed in the Bible as God's infallible truth and every doctrine therein contained without quibbling. It seeks to gather Christ's elect from all nations, kindreds, and tongues and to hasten the day when the Bridegroom shall come and receive His faithful virgins into His heavenly home.

God grant that on that day none of you will be found among the foolish virgins, but that one and all of you may enter with Him into His glory.

J. K. E. Horst.

Easter Sunday.

Luke 24, 1—12.

"Undoubtedly there are many preachers in the pulpits of our city this morning who are wasting their time to prove the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. They cannot prove it. They were not there. After all, what difference does it make? We believe in a spiritual Christ." These are the words with which a Modernist desecrated his office and disgraced his pulpit last Easter Sunday morning. He was probably not the only offender. Others deny the bodily resurrection of Christ and would rob Christendom of the precious comfort which this undeniable Scriptural truth proclaims. The whole story of the resurrection is based upon the fact that the Christ who was crucified rose again. It was a bodily resurrection, for He showed His hands and His feet to His disciples and asked them to handle Him and see. Let us feast our soul upon this truth this morning as we consider the words: —

"He Is Not Here, But Is Risen."

1. These words were addressed to people who sought a corpse. Women who had been so faithful to Christ on the day of crucifixion, who had watched His burial, had spent the Sabbath in rest. As soon as it was past, they busied themselves with the purchase of spices for the purpose of anointing the body of their precious Savior. Early on Easter morning they hastened out to Joseph's garden and carried these spices with them. They were looking for the corpse of Jesus.

They had heard promises of the resurrection, v. 7, but could not believe. Sorrow had drowned all hope. It had filled their hearts with bitter, almost impenetrable darkness. They were so overcome by sadness that they forgot all about the large stone until they neared the tomb, Mark 16, 3. Nor did they think of the Roman guard. They could not have gotten past them. This difficulty seems to have escaped them altogether. So enwrapped by sorrow that they could see only the corpse of Christ. Had perhaps walked in silence, the silence of sorrow, until the thought of the stone came to one of them. Startled, they look up and see that stone is rolled away. Note how they interpret this. Evidently expected something terrible to have happened. Were greatly frightened and perplexed. Mary Magdalene ran back. She was sure that theft of the Savior's body had been committed. The other women timidly approached the tomb. Note that they are still carrying the ointments. Still *hope* to find the body of Christ, v. 3.

Often people fix their thoughts upon a service of sadness when it should be a service of gladness. If we would look away from sorrow, we could see genuine joy.

However, the risen Lord came to their assistance. Sorrow soon dispelled. (Easter-messages. Appearances of the risen Lord.) — So to-day Jesus enters to dispel our sorrow. He asks: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

2. These words are a message from heaven. Lord sent angels to deliver first Easter sermon. Angels assigned to task which concerns the welfare of God's people. Cherubim placed at gates of Eden. At first glance this seems terrible, but also this service for man's good. There could be no redemption had man eaten of tree of life. Angels appeared at various times in Old Testament. In New Testament angel announced the coming event to Mary; preached first Christmas sermon; served Jesus after great temptation; strengthened Jesus in great battle; here first to announce Christ's victory. They are sinless messengers; shown by white, shining garments. Remarkable that sinless creatures should show concern about man's salvation. Eager to see man saved. Rejoice when a sinner is converted, Luke 15. They must have marveled at the death of Jesus. Could not explain that Prince of Life should die. Natural to them that Christ should arise. Yet they rejoiced and came to tell.

3. These words proclaim the resurrection. "He is risen" — three little words, yet they proclaim the greatest miracle of time. Death unsuccessful in attempt to hold Christ. Dreaded enemy had tackled wrong one when he fastened his horrible fangs upon Christ. The serpent which swallows a poisened egg brings on its own death. So death had swallowed poison when it swallowed Christ. He is risen. Resurrection *His own act.* He had "power to lay down His life and power to take it again. See John 10, 17. 18; John 2, 19; Acts 17, 3; 1 Cor. 15, 4; 1 Thess. 4, 14. First time ever any one came out of death by His own power. Also *work of Father.* Acts 2, 24; 3, 15; 10, 40; Rom. 1, 4; 4, 25; 10, 9; Eph. 1, 20. Not a contradiction. Fullest harmony between Father and Son throughout also in the resurrection. Angel established resurrection by proof, namely, *the empty tomb.* Much there to convince them. Had seen Christ laid away. Knew no one could have stolen the body (guard and stone). Saw garments into which He had been wrapped carefully folded and placed. No thief would have paused for this. Above all they saw that body was not there. Proves resurrection also by *reference to prophecy,* v. 6. 7. Sight of fulfilment all the more real when viewed through prophecy. God's Word must be true. Lesson for us. Strongest proof is that from the Word. That's convincing, v. 8.

4. These are words of tremendous power. Engendered and strengthened the faith of these frightened women. They now believed, v. 8. Quit search for the body at once, v. 9. Nothing attractive at the grave any more. Had they doubted Easter-message, they would have continued the search, as did Mary Magdalene, John 20, 11—18. How they must have rejoiced! That *fear* is also mentioned does not decrease joy. See Matt. 28, 8. Natural that they should be afraid and amazed. Such a sight as they beheld and words as they heard are awe-inspiring indeed. Chief feature is that they believed, as their conduct testifies.

Another phase of power is that they told. Instructed to do so, Mark 16, 7. Luke presents account in such manner as to convince us of an inward urge to tell. Twice mentioned that they told. That's the inevitable and never-failing effect of the message. Whoever knows must tell. The disciples did the same. Sought to persuade "faithless" Thomas, John 20, 24. Later willing to endure the bitterest persecution, Acts 4; 5, 18; 9, 2; 12; 14, 19, etc.; even death, Acts 7. Cf. also 2 Cor. 11, 23 f.

Even so to-day. Christ's resurrection a mighty motive for mission-work. Simply "cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts 4, 20. Unbelief and indifference of others does not silence them nor decrease their enthusiasm, v. 11. Another phase of power: it aroused impulsive Peter to action, v. 12, also John. Cp. John 20, 3—10.

5. *These words offer effective comfort and encouragement.* — If ever a group of men were discouraged, disheartened, despondent, it was the band of Christ's followers. But also, if ever any one thing dispelled blackest gloom and sadness, it was the resurrection of Jesus Christ, John 20, 20; Matt. 28, 8. Even an unbelieving Thomas was changed into a firm and rejoicing believer, John 20, 28.

Oft repeated in our lives. When misfortunes befall us, discouragements arise, sadness or sorrow or death creep into our home, how do we act? How often do we create the impression that we have no almighty Savior! How often does our conduct betray a lack of faith! We behave as though Christ were dead and everything hopeless. But let message of resurrection take hold of us, and every semblance of gloom and despair must vanish and give way to a firm and rejoicing conviction, which breaks forth into songs and shouts of triumph. Hymn 218 or 229. J. W. Behnken.

First Sunday after Easter, Quasimodogeniti.

Matt. 12, 38—42.

Thomas, one of the Twelve, gave way to unbelief when the news of Christ's death was verified, John 20, 25; cp. "faithless," v. 27. He would not meet with the other disciples. Would not believe their testimony. Arrogated unto himself the privilege of demanding visible evidence. This is characteristic of unbelief. So much of such demands to-day. People ever act like Thomas. Need not be surprised at this. Jesus met with such experiences, v. 38. He diagnosed the trouble, v. 39. A statement which we should consider: —

"An Evil and Adulterous Generation Seeketh After a Sign."

1. *This classifies those who sought it.* Certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees, v. 38. They were hostile to Christ. One of the paramount endeavors of these men was to entangle Christ if they could. Held secret conferences, where they concocted plans and schemes. Seems that this was chief business of their meetings, Matt. 12, 14. They had accused Christ of driving out devils through Beelzebub, v. 24. Christ had reproved them most earnestly and had exposed the folly of their accusation, vv. 25—37. Then certain of them came with a request for a sign. — So to-day. People who plan and scheme against Christ and His Gospel arrogantly demand a sign. Not sincere in their demand, but seek to belittle and to disprove the cause of Christ in that manner.

The Pharisees were not improving matters in the least, but were adding insult to injury by calling Christ "Master." This was rank hypocrisy. They never recognized His authority to teach. — It is even so to-day. Many enemies play the part of hypocrites. They are the worst. They use His name. They accost Him "Master." They employ all Scriptural terminology, yet they are not willing to concede that Christ is "the only-begotten Son of God," John 3, 16; "born of the Virgin Mary," Is. 7, 14; cp. Matt. 1, 18. 20. 23. 25; "the Substitute," John 1, 29; 2 Cor. 5, 21; etc. Their endearing language about Christ mere hypocrisy.

Again, the scribes and Pharisees pretended to "seek a sign" as though they would demand His credentials which granted Him authority to preach and to perform miracles. — The very warped interpretation of Scriptures to-day is nothing short of such a challenge of Christ's authority.

2. This reveals the bitter folly of their efforts. The resorting to the pretense of politeness did not deceive Christ. His all-searching eye pierced the deepest recesses of their hearts. He knew them and their foul intentions. Had frequently exposed them, Matt. 9, 4; 12, 25; 22, 18; Luke 6, 8, etc. Had convinced them that He knew even their motives, their insincerity, their hatred. So also here. He called them "evil," "adulterous." Cannot deceive Him. O the folly of hypocrisy!

Many to-day whose profession of faith is a mere sham, mere hollow pretense. They are deceiving only themselves. Christ knows them. This is true also of the "false prophets," who under the pretense of Gospel-preaching prostitute their sacred office by preaching that which is contrary to the true Gospel. See Matt. 7, 15; Jer. 23, 31; Gal. 1; 1 Tim. 1, 7; 4, 1—5; 6, 3—5. False prophets are the very worst, the most dangerous, the most loathsome species, of liars. They use God's name to cover up, to adorn, their sinful and destructive work. But they are blind if they think that they are deceiving Christ.

3. This shows that the righteous wrath of Christ was aroused. Christ was plainly indignant. He exercised greatest patience toward earnest seekers of the truth, but insincerity aroused His wrath. Call it righteous wrath, because they deserved nothing else and because Jesus could not do otherwise and remain just. He had furnished indisputable proof of His authority, an abundance of mighty miracles. Every one of them a visible sign, or demonstration, of His deity. — Again, they had God's evidence throughout the centuries. God had blessed them so signally, more than any other nation, both temporally and spiritually. Had chosen them; had established covenant with them; had given them prophets and sacrifices and ceremonies. All of this focused upon Christ. But as their fathers were "aduterous," following after the idols of the heathen, so were they now rejecting the true God in Christ Jesus. Note that after the return from the Babylonian captivity, Israel did not erect altars unto idols as formerly; but they were saturated with self-righteousness. As soon as

Jesus revealed Himself as the real Redeemer, the real Messiah, they were ready to forsake Him, John 6, 60—66. Had He praised their righteousness, He would have been their hero. Jesus employed sharp language, "evil," "adulterous." Unbelief is adultery, a forsaking of the Bridegroom, a following after strange gods. Jesus absolutely refused to perform a miracle. Would not have believed it anyhow. He knew them as He knew the mockers on Golgotha. Cp. Matt. 27, 42; Mark 15, 32.

4. This prompted Christ to give them the sign of the prophet Jonah. The reference: Jonah 1, 17—2, 10. Of course, the carping critics challenge the truth of this account. They do not want it to be true. Call it a physical impossibility. Claim that throat of whale is so small that it could not have swallowed Jonah. What shall we say? Let them scoff. They will do it anyhow. Nothing so sacred but that their vile mind and tongue would besmirch it with ridicule, nothing so firm and solid but that their contemptuous heart would attempt to undermine it and to blast it by their mockery. Let them rage. They will not succeed. God's truth remains despite their attacks. Men who are not willing to believe the miraculous will not believe the history of Jonah. But despite all their rantings the fact remains that Jonah was swallowed by the great fish and cast again on the shore. The fact remains also that Jesus used it as a "sign" to be given to these enemies, a "sign" which typifies His own resurrection, v. 40 — a "sign" which should silence them. The fact that Jesus speaks of "three days and three nights" is no mistake. Jews computed time like that. Any part of a day was counted as a full day. Jesus was in the grave a part of Friday, all of Saturday, and a part of Sunday.

5. This gave Christ an opportunity to utter a solemn warning. V. 41. Nineveh heard Jonah and repented, Jonah 3, 5. That extremely wicked city believed the prophet's word and turned to God in earnest repentance. Cp. Jonah 3, 7, "fasting"; 3, 8, "sackcloth," "cry mightily," "turn from evil way." But the Jews had heard their Messiah, had witnessed His miracles, had beheld undeniable proof, and yet they would not believe. Nineveh would rise in judgment against them. Nineveh had heeded Jonah, and they had rejected Him who is "greater than Jonah," v. 41. Christ also quotes the example of the queen of Sheba. Cp. 1 Kings 10, 1—13. This queen from foreign soil had undertaken a long, cumbersome, even dangerous, journey to convince herself of the wisdom of Solomon, the world's wisest and richest man, 1 Kings 10, 23. She saw and believed. But this "adulterous generation" had seen and heard, but refused to believe, "one greater than Solomon": greater in wisdom, for He knows all things; greater in riches, for He can bestow what all silver and gold cannot purchase.

Conclusion. — John 20, 29. J. W. Behnken.

Second Sunday after Easter, Misericordias Domini.

John 10, 1—11. [illegible]

Jesus the true Master in the use of parables. His illustrations truly illustrate. They teach. They impress one. They are taken from well-known scenes. Their very simplicity is beautiful and fascinating. They grip the attention because they begin with that which we know and explain that which we do not know. In text Savior relates that which is well known. Jews knew full well of the relationship between the shepherd and his flock. The hills and slopes and valleys of Palestine were spotted with flocks. They knew what characteristics are required in a good shepherd. The Savior embodies some of these things in to-day's text. It is rich in instruction.

The Good Shepherd.

1. The good shepherd enters by the door. Get picture fixed in mind how people of that day built their sheepfolds. Often it was part of the house, the outer court of it. It was necessary to come through the door of the house to enter the fold. They did this for the safety of the sheep. Thus no one could come to the sheep but he to whom the porter opened, v. 3. The true shepherd was well known and had no difficulty about entering, v. 2. He had full authority by virtue of his office. No necessity that he should attempt entry in any other way. If any attempted to break through somewhere else, if any would force the door, or climb up some other way, it was very evident that he was not the shepherd, but a thief and a robber, v. 1. This may mean but little to us and bear little weight and importance. Note, however, that flocks meant much to children of Israel. Thousands depended upon them for livelihood. Sheep a precious temporal possession. Explains why they exercised such great care and concern about their safety.

Note well that sheep are a type of Christians, God's people. They are extremely precious, not because of inherent value, for they have sinned against God as well as others, but because they have been purchased by Christ at such a staggering price and because they have been washed and cleansed by the holy, precious blood of the Savior. That's why God guards them as the apple of His eye, Ps. 17, 8; Zech. 2, 8. That's why He wants them to have proper pasture, Ps. 23, 1—3. That's why He does not want the wrong shepherd over them. Cf. Deut. 18, 22; Jer. 14, 14; 23, 16; Ezek. 13, 2; Matt. 7, 15; 24, 11, etc.

2. The good shepherd is known to the sheep. In Orient shepherds act differently from here. There they lead (not drive) the sheep. The sheep follow. This presupposes that they know the shepherd. There were many shepherds on the plains. Would they not follow wrong one? How would they know? Note v. 3, "hear his voice."

They grew so accustomed to shepherd's voice that they could readily distinguish it from any other. Knew exactly when their shepherd spoke or called. More than that, the good shepherd knew every individual sheep by name. Note "he calleth his own sheep by name," v. 3. When they were all together, when different flocks had mingled and become mixed, he knew every one of his sheep by name and could call these names. The sheep would answer to such a call. This is very much as we find it to-day in country districts. Farmers have names for their horses, and mules, and cows, and dogs, etc. These animals answer to these names. So sheep would not follow another voice. Even if they heard their name called by a wrong shepherd, they would not follow. Note that they would even flee from any other shepherd, v. 5.

What a wonderful lesson for to-day! Christians should heed the voice of the true Shepherd only. Cf. Rom. 16, 17 and note "mark them" and "avoid them"; Titus 3, 10. 11; 1 John 4, 1; 2 John 10. 11. God expects Christians to be very careful. They must exercise greatest precaution. False teachers are very busy. They are very dangerous. Many do not want to hear this. Much is being said that it does not make such a great difference what you teach as long as you live right, that doctrinal differences should be wiped out, that their existence is not justified. You can rest assured that no one rejoices more at such foolish "babble" than the false teachers. Of course, they would like to appear harmless. That's how they can come close to the flock. But mark well that they are dangerous. Hence Christians should "prove them."—What a lesson for preachers! They must come in at the door, which is Christ, v. 9. If they do not, they are robbers and thieves. Again, they must speak properly. Only Christ's Word has any claim in the Church. If they speak not the Word of Christ, they are robbers and thieves. Preachers must know their sheep and must be known of them. This is necessary that they may bring the very things which the flock needs.

3. The good shepherd is also the door. Jesus changes the comparison. Turns to another phase of this picture, or illustration, v. 7. There was a good reason. They did not understand the parable about the Good Shepherd. They were hostile to Him. He had not gained His authority to teach and to preach as they thought it must be done. We would say, He had not secured His license, His commission, His ordination, from them. Hence they did not, perhaps even did not want to, understand. Not interested in His claims, with the exception that they sought something against Him. Hence Jesus seeks another avenue, another phase of the parable, to bring the truth home to them. He is very earnest. Note the "verily, verily," v. 7. Wants them to know that there is but one door into the Kindom and *that He is that Door,* Acts 4, 12; 1 Cor. 3, 11; 1 Tim. 2, 5.

We need to note this lesson to-day. People have very odd and very warped conceptions of the kingdom of God and how they may enter. Majority would enter by the door of character, or door of self-righteousness. This door does not lead into the Kingdom. There is only one door, and that is Christ. By Him, by faith in Him, by trusting in Him, people enter into the Church and into heaven. By Him, and Him alone, they enjoy the marvelous blessings of the Kingdom, v. 9. Note "be saved." In Christ we have forgiveness, Rom. 3, 24; Eph. 1, 7; Col. 1, 14. Forgiveness ushers in many other astounding blessings, peace with God, Rom. 5, 1; assurance, Rom. 8, 1; life and salvation, Rom. 8, 38. 39. Note "go in and out." Christians are right at home with Christ. Proper family relationship. Not only the joys, but also the privileges of the home do the Christians enjoy. Note "find pasture," v. 9. The Savior supplies every need of the Christian. No lack, Ps. 23, 1.

4. The Good Shepherd is Jesus Christ. No doubt about this if we view Jesus in true light. He was prophesied as such. Cf. Is. 11, 11; Ezek. 34, 23; 37, 24; Zech. 13, 7. The whole Old Testament serves this one grand purpose that it foretells the coming of the Messiah, both by word and by ceremonies. The New Testament speaks of Jesus as such. Cf. Heb. 13, 20; 1 Pet. 2, 25. He Himself boldly claims to be such, John 10, 11. There can be no doubt about it. As the Good Shepherd, He has not come to destroy any of the sheep, v. 10. This is the work of the heretics, who murder the souls of men by their false teaching. Christ's purpose is rather to "give life" and to give an abundance of it, v. 10. His whole mission on earth corroborates every claim. We know that Jesus provides, Ps. 23, 1; He tenderly cares, Is. 40, 11; He sacrificed Himself, v. 11; He rose again, Heb. 13, 20; He will welcome the wanderers, 1 Pet. 2, 25; He will crown the faithful, 1 Pet. 5, 4. In the face of such marvelous claims of marvelous benefits which we enjoy because of Christ can there be any doubt that He is the Good Shepherd?

Seeing I am Jesus lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am
O'er my Shepherd kind and good,
Who provides me daily food
And His lamb by name doth call,
For He knows and loves us all.

Guided by His gentle staff
Where the sunny pastures laugh,
I go in and out and feed,
Lacking nothing that I need;
When I thirst, my feet He brings
To the fresh and living springs.

Shall I not rejoice for this?
He is mine, and I am His.
And when these bright days are past,
Safely in His arms at last
He will bear me home to heaven.
Ah, what joy hath Jesus given!

J. W. Behnken.

Third Sunday after Easter, Jubilate.

Mark 2, 18—20.

Read Ps. 23. It gives expression to the Christian's holy joy in his Lord and Shepherd. There he sings the praises of Him who provides all that he needs for body and soul. Green pastures, still, refreshing waters, sweet, soul-restoring comfort, guidance and protection in times of great dangers. And this joy continues though fearful storms sweep down and mighty enemies threaten to attack him. Even in the shadow of death this joy is not destroyed. On the contrary, it is this joy in the Lord that enables him to bear up and carry on under all circumstances. Therefore he concludes his song with the triumphant conviction: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Alas, that a Christian so often forgets and fails to appreciate the joy in the Lord! He is more inclined to think of his sorrows and to complain of his hardships, and thus he makes his burden heavier and more difficult to bear. Look up to your Lord; study what Scripture says about His person and office; enjoy Jesus. Our lesson tells us how.

Our Joy in the Lord.

1. Wherein it consists; *2. How it is obtained.*

1.

V. 18. Fasting means abstaining from taking food for a certain time and, rightly understood, is expressive of sorrow or sadness, repentance. But the Pharisees understood it to be an act of worship whereby they would merit God's favor. And the disciples of John seem to have accepted this erroneous idea. They do not enjoy Jesus. There is criticism, contempt, and no joy in the Lord.

V. 19. Jesus' answer. He uses a striking illustration. A wedding-feast. There is joy, happiness, gladness; no sorrow, no sadness. Everybody is happy. Jesus is the Bridegroom. The joy of the disciples when they saw His wonderful miracles, — the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the stilling of the storm, — these exhibitions of his marvelous power and wisdom. When they heard His magnificent sermons, so filled with sweet comfort, a strong feeling of elation must have swept through their souls. Our Lord and Master — no one is like Him! It is true, much of their joy was based upon carnal expectations, but that was burned away in the fire of their Master's suffering and death, v. 20.

Jesus is the Bridegroom. Hos. 2, 19: "And I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies."

In order to understand in some measure the magnitude of the Bridegroom's love and beauty, we must remember the pitiful state of the bride. She was not beautiful. She had been unfaithful. She had listened to the seducer. She had thus lost her beauty. She was utterly ruined. No hope. Before her were death and damnation. She had become abominable in the sight of the holy Lord. She was lying in the gutter of sin and — liked it. But now behold the wonderful loving-kindness of the Bridegroom; instead of spurning her forever, He left his heavenly glory and stepped down to her, partaking of her flesh and blood. He suffered and died for her. And with His own blood He washed away the filth and the shame and made her beautiful. He covered her shame with the beautiful robe of His righteousness. Was there ever such a bridegroom? Our glorious Savior, who has redeemed us, purchased and won us, etc., that we may be His own, etc. That is our joy in Him. Therefore the angel proclaimed at His birth: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

And this joy is lasting. Jesus' disciples, later on in His service, met with the bitter hatred and cruelty of His enemies. They suffered persecutions. (Describe them.) But in all these sufferings they had that joy in the Lord. They knew that their Master was with them, guiding their steps, shaping things for their good, giving them strength to endure. For was not their Lord exalted above everything, having all power in the world? They would see Him again in His divine glory and enjoy that glory themselves.

It is the same with us. We study the life of our Redeemer in Holy Scriptures. We see Him suffer and die for us. We see Him rise triumphant from the grave, ascend to heaven, and occupy the throne of world government. And that is *our* Lord. It is for us He did all that. We are therefore safe with Him, safe in tribulations, safe in persecutions, safe in death. That is our joy in the Lord. Would you, too, have this joy? Let me tell you *how it is obtained.*

2.

Vv. 21. 22. An old garment is rotten, it easily tears. If you mend an old garment with a new piece of cloth, you do a foolish thing; for such mending will not hold, the rent is made worse. The wine-bottles mentioned in our text were made from goat-hides. New wine is strong; it ferments, expands. If you put such new wine into such old leather bottles, they will burst; they are too old to withstand the pressure. Therefore the rule to put new wine into new bottles.

The meaning of these parables. The Pharisees had the notion that they could work out their own salvation. The pride of natural man. By keeping the Law, augmented by their own laws, they would earn God's favor. That was their old garment, their old bottle. But that garment was rotten. Our own righteousness is as filthy rags. Cannot be mended by patching it. And as long as these people remained in such a state of mind, they could not receive the new wine of the Gospel. Indeed, they refused to accept Jesus as the Redeemer. They hated Him with a bitter hatred.

They have many followers to-day. "Be good, then you will go to heaven." "Be honest and upright in your dealings with your fellowmen, do your duty as you see it, be faithful to your wife," etc., etc. Such a virtuous life is what the secret societies call the pass to heaven. Such conduct is good before the tribunal of the state and therefore, they argue, ought to be good before the tribunal of God. Consequently they accept some of the teachings of Christ, especially those pertaining to our conduct. Some even may accept Him as a Redeemer, but only as far as their weaknesses or failings are concerned. Thus they attempt to mend their old garment with new cloth, or to put new wine into old bottles. But the Lord emphatically declares that that will not do. In this way joy in the Lord is not obtained.

There must be a complete change. Study God's holy Law; see what the Law really demands; see that perfection, that spotless holiness, that snowy purity, which ought to be yours; hear that threatening voice which curses with an eternal curse every one who fails in the least in its fulfilment. And if you realize your utter inability to attain such perfection and to escape that dreadful curse, then you have understood the Law aright. Then you will throw away that foolish pride, become humble, and acknowledge that you are a lost and condemned creature.

Then listen to the gladsome news of the Gospel, that God Himself has wrought perfection for you, has gained forgiveness of your sins, freedom from that curse, and comfort your soul with the glorious truth that Jesus is your Redeemer. Now you have obtained joy in the Lord. Now you understand the rapture of the psalmist: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want; . . . He restoreth my soul." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And Mary sang: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior." Nicodemus thought that the old garment could be patched; but Jesus told him: John 3, 3. 16. H. J. BOUMAN.

Fourth Sunday after Easter, Cantate.

John 5, 19—29.

Many do not like to hear doctrinal sermons. They call them dry and unprofitable. Such people seem to forget that such a statement is a doctrine also. For a doctrine is a statement of what a man thinks or believes concerning certain persons, matters, or conditions. True doctrine is what the Bible reveals about God and man and the relation between the two. But why this foolish aversion to doctrine? It is because many believe that they are saved by their own works. Hence they place deeds above creeds. They say: It does not matter what you believe, but how you live. What is necessary is not a creed, but right living. This opinion is almost universal, because man reasons thus by nature.

To such it is not necessary to know about Christ and His work of atonement. Nor is it necessary that there be faith and the means by which faith is being wrought. And to preach doctrinal sermons about these things is to them a waste of time. Therefore such remarkable texts as the one before us are seldom, if ever, expounded.

Let us not be drawn into such a foolish position. All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable. There is a living power in the Word of God. What is revealed there is life-giving, strength-giving food for the soul. It is preached for the purpose of bringing life into those who are dead in trespasses and sins and nourishing that life in them until their blessed end. With this in view, let us now listen with the most devout attention to what the Savior reveals about Himself.

Our Glorious Savior.

1. His divine majesty. *2. His wonderful works.*

1.

V. 19. A solemn declaration: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Equal to an oath. The hearer's or reader's attention is to be roused. He should listen, take heed. Something marvelous is going to be said, v. 20.

The Son's complete, perfect unity and equality with the Father is set forth. Whatever the Father does He, the Son, does likewise. With the Father nothing is impossible; likewise with the Son nothing is impossible. Like Father, like Son, one in essence. This is set forth in a magnificent manner in the Athanasian Creed. (Read it.)

V. 20. This relation between the Father and the Son is based upon love. The Father loves the Son and therefore shows Him all things. The Son is thus familiar with all the works of God: creation and preservation of the world, the destinies of nations and of individuals, the plan of salvation. Yea, the Son is Himself active in all these divine works. — But remember, the Son is our Savior. Our Savior here stands before us as the mighty Creator and Preserver and the Ruler of the world, as the One from whom all blessings flow, as the Source of all life and strength, as the One in whom we move and live and have our being. O glorious Savior! And He is loved by the Father. There is no conflict there. The Father is well pleased in Him. God enjoys His Son's work, especially the work of redemption. Again I say: O glorious Redeemer!

V. 21. Once more the absolute equality of Father and Son is stressed. As the Father is the Source of life, so likewise the Son. He imparts life, physical, spiritual, and eternal, v. 26.

V. 22. And that to whom He will. It is in His power to take away life and to give it. It is left to Him to decide to whom eternal life is to be given and to whom not. He is the supreme Judge; after He has passed sentence, no further appeal is granted. Glorious Savior!

V. 23. That is the Father's purpose. Divine honor should be rendered the Son. We should honor the Son as we honor the Father. It was indeed the right thing to do when Thomas worshiped Jesus, saying, "My Lord and my God." Here we think of the lodge-religion, from which Jesus is eliminated. All such Christless religions are condemned by this sentence: "He that honoreth not the Father," etc. And they are without hope and comfort.

Here is no subordination, but perfect equality. The Savior stands before us in His divine majesty, in all His heavenly glory and power, mighty to save, mighty to give life and salvation, mighty to defend us against all dangers within and without. Indeed, He is the Rock of Ages, and no one will perish who clings to this Rock. Glorious Savior! V. 24.

2.

Having divine majesty, Jesus does wonderful *works*. He now mentions them.

V. 25. Also this part of His revelation He introduces with a solemn "Verily, verily, I say unto you," and then He says: "The hour is coming *and now is*." The hour was there. The voice of the Son of God was heard. And those who heard Him, really heard Him, regained life. Yes, man is dead, dead in sins. "There is no one that doeth good and sinneth not, no, not one." Man is like a house fully equipped with fixtures and motors. But there is no light, and the motors do not run, because there is no connection with the power-plant.

But here comes our glorious Savior. He is our Source of light and power. And by His voice, by His Word, He sends life, light, and power. His Word enters the soul of man and establishes the connection with Jesus. Now there is light, now the motors begin to run. The believer's mind begins to understand, his eyes to look to the hills whence cometh help, his mouth to utter praise and thanksgiving, his hands to work in the service of the Lord, his feet to walk in the right paths. Jesus' Word is spirit and is life. Here is the explanation for the miracle of the victory of the Church. A few unlearned men go out into the world; their weapon is nothing but a message, the message of the Savior of mankind. Jews and Gentiles oppose them, they try to suppress that message, to still that voice; try it with all the weapons at their command: mockery, calumny, brutal force, bloody persecution. But those few men conquer; they wrest a kingdom from a bitterly hostile world.

They were able to do that because their message was the voice of Jesus Christ and therefore the power of God unto salvation.

V. 26. Our Savior, the God-man, has life in Himself like the Father. And He gives this life through the preaching of His Gospel, which is a power of God unto salvation and gives life, Rom. 1, 16; 2 Cor. 3, 6. Not only the work of redemption, but also the work of regeneration is His. That we are redeemed from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, that we know this, that we trust in Him, comfort ourselves, serve under Him, and look forward to eternal life in heaven, — all this we owe to Him, our glorious Savior.

V. 27. Because He is the Son of Man, because He has so wonderfully, so willingly, executed the Father's plan of redemption by becoming man and, as our Substitute suffering and dying for the sins of the world, the Father is well pleased with Him and has given Him everything, has placed everything in His hands, even the final Judgment. Christians, rejoice! The day will come when you will see your glorious Savior in the judgment-seat as the Judge of the whole world, surrounded by the heavenly hosts. And before Him will be assembled all the nations of the earth.

V. 28. Our glorious Savior will call all the dead from their graves by the power of His voice. And this power no one can resist. Death must relinquish his hold, corruption must give up what it robbed. Every man, woman, and child that has lived since the world began, must come forth and appear before that Judge and hear His final sentence.

V. 29. Here is the sentence — either life or damnation. It is either eternal blessedness in heaven or eternal damnation in hell. Those who have heard His voice in the Gospel, have accepted Him in faith, and manifested their faith in good works, in service unto Him, will receive eternal life. Those who have disregarded His voice and lived a Christless life, doing evil in His sight, will be damned.

Let us, then, hear His voice and worship Him, our glorious Savior, the Source of life. H. J. BOUMAN.

Fifth Sunday after Easter, Rogate.

Luke 18, 1—8.

In the First Commandment, God demands of us perfect trust, and as an expression of such trust He enjoins prayer in the Second Commandment; we are to call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. Thus prayer is a part of the Law. Since the works of the Law are written in the hearts of man, all religions demand prayer. Prayer is instinctive with man. Even those who call prayer nonsense and foolishness cry out in prayer in times of great danger.

But why does God demand prayer? Many ask this question. God has ordered everything. His laws immutable. His foreknowledge, etc.

In view of this, prayer seems unnecessary; it cannot change God's designs. And does He not give what we need without our prayer? Such and similar reasonings influence also the Christian; hence his infrequent and half-hearted praying.

But the fact remains that prayer is demanded. Christ invites us, urges us, to pray; He Himself prayed when He walked visibly on earth, and He still prays for us. The inspired writings of the apostles and evangelists breathe the spirit of prayer.

It is therefore certainly instructive and of great benefit for us to search for the reason of prayer.

God's Goodness in Commanding Us to Pray.

1. Through prayer we realize our dependence.

2. Through prayer we worship God.

1.

V. 1. The Master, with matchless skill, teaches us that we ought always to pray and not to grow faint. He uses a parable for this purpose. Studying this parable in the light of the Lord's own explanation, we shall see God's goodness in commanding us to pray.

The judge and the widow. (Text.) Describe them. Before her trouble started, the widow perhaps had given the judge no thought. It had not become clear to her that she needed his protection and help. But when she was threatened by an adversary, who perhaps was trying to rob her of her property, she remembered that there was somebody able to help her to protect her rights. And she turned to him again and again, she pestered him, she was after him constantly. And the more she petitioned him, the more she realized her utter dependence upon him. She felt powerless; she had nothing with which to oppose the cunning and power of her adversary.

Application. — It is very difficult for fallen man to realize his utter dependence upon God. He wants to be like God. He considers himself master of his destiny. He thinks that it is his knowledge, his ability, his industry, his work, that accomplishes everything. Pharaoh's defiant attitude; Goliath's reliance upon the stoutness of his limbs; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4, 30.

Against this devilish pride we Christians must fight. It dwells in us also. It makes us forget that we cannot live without God, that our very existence is wholly dependent upon God. In Him we live and move and have our being. And when we pray, when our thoughts turn to God, the Author of our being, we realize our utter dependence. A great danger may have been the first cause of our turning to God in prayer; but while we pray, while from our soul surges up the cry for help, we become more and more conscious of the fact that we are utterly helpless, that we are not masters, but as tiny bubbles on a vast sea, drifting helplessly along at the mercy of another power. Yes, we need the helping, sustaining, protecting, guiding hand of God.

Still more so in spiritual matters. We are all sinners and hopelessly under the curse of the Law, in the power of Satan, facing temporal and eternal death. And still natural man believes that he is capable of extricating himself from this terrible plight. But what can we do to escape that terrible doom, to break that powerful hold, of the Evil One? What would become of us if God in His wonderful mercy had not come to our rescue? Indeed, we are utterly dependent upon Him. And the more we pray, the more we realize this.

And that is good for us. It means that we are liberated from the bondage of Satan's lie, the lie that we need no God, no Savior. We see the truth, and "the truth shall make us free." Therefore God commands us to pray; through prayer we are to realize anew and never to forget that we are dependent upon Him. And that leads us to the second thought: Through prayer we worship God.

2.

The judge (text) finally yielded to the insistent demand of the widow. He did it to escape further annoyance; not for the sake of justice, not because he had compassion on her. But the widow, by going to him, acknowledged his power.

By praying to God, we confess that He is our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Comforter. All flesh must go to Him for life and the support of life; the eyes of all look to Him for sustenance. He rules the world and shapes the destinies of the nations; He defends us against all danger and guards and protects us from all evil. And all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us.

We worship Him as our Savior, who in His infinite mercy and compassion redeemed us, purchased and won us from all our sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, by His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. We should become His own and live under Him in His kingdom; we should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Because we were so utterly helpless, however, that we could not even accept this gracious gift, He Himself, by His Gospel, wrought saving faith in us and keeps us in this faith. What a wonderful God we have, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter! Therefore we should love Him, serve and obey Him, pledge ourselves, body and soul, to Him.

Blessed are we if we do that. For that means returning to the Source of life and joy. As the turning from God means severing the connection between ourselves and the Fountain of life and bliss and falling into death and sorrow, so the turning to God by faith means restoring the life-giving connection between ourselves and the Fountain from which all blessings flow.

Behold the goodness of God in commanding us to pray. For praying to the true God means turning to Him who alone is able and willing to help in every need, bodily and spiritual. His goodness, His compassion, is behind His command to pray. He does not need our prayer, but we need it. It is necessary for our well-being in this life and in the life to come that we turn to Him who is God alone, besides whom there is none other that is able and willing to help. In this He totally differs from that unjust judge. He grants our prayer not to escape annoyance, but because He loves us. He who has given His only-begotten Son to die for us is certainly willing to do the lesser thing — to hear our prayer.

Let us, then, not grow faint, but let us be constant in prayer; then we shall grow more mindful of our dependence and become more fervent in worshiping our glorious Father, Redeemer, and Comforter.

H. J. BOUMAN.

Sixth Sunday after Easter, Exaudi.

John 8, 12—20.

"These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple," v. 20. Jesus had come down to Judea and Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, chap. 7, 2. 10. 14. Israelites for seven days lived in booths made of boughs of trees to remind them of their sojourn in the wilderness. "It was also customary in the evening following the first day of the festival and perhaps on the subsequent evenings to illuminate the Court of the Women from two lofty stands, each supporting four immense lamps, which threw their light not only into the courts of the Temple, but far and wide over the city. The wicks were made of the cast-off linen of the priests. Levites stationed on the steps of the court rendered instrumental music and sang psalms." (Davis, *Bible Dictionary,* p. 756.)

"I Am the Light of the World."

1. The meaning of this statement; 2. The truth of this statement; 3. The acceptance of this statement.

1.

a) *"I am."* Jesus is speaking. He speaks of God "the Father," vv. 16. 18, and identifies Himself with the Father as His only Son, vv. 16. 19; John 1, 14; who is "begotten of the Father from eternity" (eternal generation). "I know whence I came and whither I go," v. 14. "The Father that sent Me," v. 16. Ps. 2, 7; Col. 1, 17; Rev. 1, 8. 17. 18; Is. 43, 13; John 17, 5. 24; 7, 1. 2; Micah 5, 2.

b) *The Light.* The brilliant illumination during the Feast of Tabernacles reminded Israel also of the pillar of the cloud which moved in front of the Israelites during their desert pilgrimage, Ex. 13, 21. 22; Neh. 9, 19; Num. 12, 5; Deut. 31, 15. It was the "I Am" who was in that cloud, the Angel of the Lord, the Redeemer, "who was made flesh" and who, referring to the Old Testament types, states: "I am the Light."

This Light assures spiritual *illumination.* The world in darkness, Is. 60, 1. 3. 19; Rom. 1, 21; Eph. 4, 18. Not ephod, oracle, flight of birds; not magi, druids, augurs; not philosopher, scientist, or theologian — Christ is the Light which alone can penetrate and dissipate that darkness, John 1, 9; Matt. 11, 27; John 1, 18; Luke 2, 32; 1 Tim. 6, 16.

The prophetic office of Christ.

This Light further assures *guidance* by word and example, Ps. 32, 8; 23, 1. 3; 73, 24. Hymns 331 and 337.

"Then, subordinate to this principal thought, is the other on which I may touch for a moment, that Christ, like that pillar of a cloud and of fire, guides us in our pilgrimage. You may remember how emphatically the Book of Numbers (chap. 9) dwells upon the absolute control of all the marches and halts by the movements of the cloud. When it was taken up, they journeyed; when it settled down, they encamped. As long as it lay spread above the Tabernacle, there they stayed. Impatient eyes might look and impatient spirits chafe — no matter. The camp might be pitched in a desolate place, away from wells and palm-trees, away from shade, among fiery serpents, and open to fierce foes — no matter. As long as the pillar was motionless, no man stirred. Weary, slow days might pass in this compulsory inactivity; but 'whether it were two days or a month or a year that the cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle, the children of Israel journeyed not.' And whenever it lifted itself up, — no matter how short had been the halt, how weary and footsore the people, how pleasant the resting-place, — up with the tent-pegs immediately and away. If the signal were given at midnight, when all but the watchers slept, or at midday, it was all the same. There was the true Commander of their march." (*Maclaren.*)

Christ, the Light, brings *comfort* in the darkness of sorrow, trouble, and death, Ps. 23, 4.

Jesus is the only Light that brings *salvation,* Is. 49, 6b. Christ removed the darkness of sin and death and damnation and brought life and immortality to light, 2 Tim. 1, 10.

"The Light" — only one; there is none other.

c) *"Of the world,"* mankind; not of America or India only, but of all nations, of each individual; of Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, Luther, Napoleon, Nero, St. Paul, Pharaoh, Moses. Oh, that the world knew it! Is. 9, 2.

2.

a) We know that Jesus is the Light of the world *from His own statement,* vv. 12. 18. "I am One that beareth witness of Myself." His Word is the Truth. "I am the Truth." Never guile or deceit was found in His mouth. His challenge, v. 46, is unanswered to this day. V. 14: "My record is true." Why should we refuse to accept the testimony of such a witness?

b) *"And the Father* that sent Me beareth witness of Me," v. 18. "The testimony of two men is true," v. 17. Deut. 17, 6; 19, 15; 18, 15. 18. The Father has borne witness, Matt. 3, 17; 17, 5; John 12, 28; especially through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, 1 Pet. 1, 3; Rom. 1, 4. He does so to-day through Holy Writ and through His Holy Spirit in the hearts of men.

3.

a) The Pharisees disbelieved, rejected the Lord's statement. They were quick in answering, "Thy record is not true," v. 12. "Where is Thy Father?" v. 19. John 1, 5. 11. — "And the Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They judged after the flesh, v. 15, as all unbelievers do, by outward appearance; worldly wisdom, without spiritual insight and understanding, v. 19. Their unbelief was wilful ignorance, persistent doubt, malicious rejection of the truth. The same malicious unbelief animates the world to-day. Yet impotent, helpless, hopeless unbelief, vv. 20. 59.

Rejection implies that the unbeliever will remain in spiritual and eternal darkness, John 3, 19—21; in outer darkness, Matt. 8, 12.

"I once happened to be on a visit to a great castle situated on the top of a hill. There was a steep cliff, at the bottom of which was a rapid river. Late one night there was a person anxious to get home from that castle in the midst of a thunder-storm. The night was blackness itself. The woman was asked to stop till the storm was over, but she declined: next they begged her to take a lantern that she might be able to keep upon the road from the castle to her home. She said she did not require a lantern, but could do very well without one. She went. Perhaps she was frightened by the storm (I know not the cause), but in the midst of the darkness she wandered from the path and fell over the cliff. The next day that swollen river washed to the shore the poor, lifeless body of this foolish woman." (*Bishop Villiers.*)

What disaster, however, is awaiting those who love darkness rather than the Light?

b) Others accept the truth of this statement. Faith. "He that followeth Me," vv. 12. 46. Following the Light means accepting the warmth and blessings it spreads and following its guidance. *Result:*

"Shall not walk in darkness," v. 12b. "But shall have the Light of life," v. 12c. John 1, 4; Ps. 36, 9; Eph. 5, 8; Col. 1, 13.

"When Alexander the Great visited the Greek philosopher Diogenes, he asked him if there was anything that he could give him. He got this short answer, 'I want nothing but that you should stand from between me and the sun.' One thing there is which should never satisfy and content us, and that is 'anything that stands between our souls and Christ.'" (*J. C. Ryle.*)

"One writing of a torchlight procession at a country station in honor of a returned hero, says: 'As the procession started, one torch after another blazed into radiance, as if touched by electricity. One couldn't tell what lighted them; but presently a small child was discovered crouching under some timbers to keep away from the wind, with a lighted candle in his hand. Every torch-bearer came to him for light. Silent, smiling, happy, with one little hand sheltering the flame held in the other, this little fellow was lighting up the world of darkness!' The Gospel is the light of the world, but somebody must hold it and give it out; a child may." (*Great Thoughts.*)

H. W. Bartels.

Pentecost Sunday.

John 14, 15—21.

The words of our text were spoken by Jesus on the eve of His great Passion, in the "upper room," Luke 22, 11. 12. "And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room, furnished; there make ready." After the Passover the institution of the Lord's Supper, the footwashing, John 13, 2. 4; after Judas "was gone out," 13, 30. 31, immediately before Jesus and the Eleven journeyed to Gethsemane, 13, 31; 18, 1. The disciples had forebodings of an impending disaster. The Master would leave them — "I go away." Nevertheless He would not forsake them. He assures them of —

[Another introduction: Nineteenth centennial of Pentecost, Acts 2. Spread, growth, saving influence of the Church. All this because the Savior kept the promise He made at His parting to His disciples concerning —]

Another Comforter.

1. Who is the other Comforter? 2. What is the other Comforter to do? 3. How are we to appropriate Him and His comfort?

1.

a) A *"Comforter"* is assured, a Paraclete. A paraclete is one who is called and commissioned to be at our side as our helper, as an advocate, who is to speak for us and defend us in a court of justice.

b) Jesus speaks of *"another* Comforter." He Himself was the great Comforter, Paraclete, Advocate, Helper, Guide, Teacher, who had so faithfully ministered unto His disciples, Is. 61, 2. 3; 66, 13; *e. g.*, Matt. 8, 25. 26; John 18, 8. 9. Especially did He dispense the comfort of pardon and peace, Matt. 9, 2; John 21, 15; 8, 11; Luke 15; 1 John 2, 1. The disciples had found in Him the Good Shepherd, Ps. 23; John 10, 11. 14. 27. 28. They knew Him to be the Christ and Son of the living Father, God Himself, Matt. 16, 16.

"Another" Comforter was assured, v. 16, "even the Spirit of Truth," v. 17, "which is the Holy Ghost," v. 26. He is not merely an influence, quality, power of God, but a Person — that *"He* may abide," . . . "it seeth *Him* not" . . . *"Him . . . He,"* vv. 16. 17, who has separate intelligence and will and performs a separate work. This Comforter is a *divine* Person, God, Acts 5, 3. 4; 1 Cor. 3, 16; with divine properties, as omnipresence, who "may abide with you forever, . . . dwelleth with you and shall be in you" and in every Christian's heart to the end of days, Ps. 139, 7—11.

2.

Now, after Jesus has called attention to another Comforter, He assures His disciples of a most remarkable ministry, or service, on the part of the Comforter and of a most joyful religious experience on their part.

a) In the first place, He makes the tremendous statement, which they at the time so little understood: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," v. 18, *οὐκ ἀφήσω ὑμᾶς ὀρφανούς.* They would not be in the forlorn situation of dependent orphans bereft of their parents. Had this been the state of affairs after the gruesome spectacle on Calvary, if Jesus had remained in the tomb, they would have disbanded in utter disappointment and despair. There never would have been the Christian Church, to say the least. "I will come to you." "Because I live, ye shall live also," v. 19. He is the Living One, with the undying and eternal life in Him, Jehovah, the I Am, who guarantees His constant presence to be with us always and not only to imbue us with hope and courage, but to give us life and immortality. We are to have and to experience in our hearts and in our lives the powerful, energizing, vitalizing presence of our Lord, the Son of the living God.

b) In order that the living Christ, our Lord, may thus ever be with us and in us and we in Him, He assures us of the ministry of the Spirit of the Truth, the Holy Ghost, v. 16 f.: *"I* will pray the Father, *κἀγὼ ἐρωτήσω,* and He shall give you . . . Truth," v. 26 a; 15, 26. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, v. 17 b. 1 Cor. 3, 16; 2 Cor. 6, 16.

The work of the Spirit; v. 20: "In that day *ye shall know."* The

Spirit of Truth will enlighten us, lead us into all truth, John 16, 13. Particularly will this Comforter lead us into the glorious, saving knowledge of Christ, our Savior; vv. 20. 21: "that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you . . . and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him," ἐμφανίσω.

"This remarkable word implies that the scene or place of the higher manifestation (v. 19) will be in the consciousness of the soul." (*Reynold.*) Christ will unfold Himself unto us so that with the eye of our faith we might behold His glory and majesty and divine sublimity. Our knowledge of Him is still very imperfect. "But the flower is but a bud when we get it, and as we hold it, it opens its petals to the light." (*Maclaren.*)

This knowledge of our adorable Lord, however, is not a mere matter of the understanding and head, but of the heart and soul. It is saving, sanctifying faith. John 9, 24. 25. 30. 32. 33: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see," etc.

"These new influences, this revolution in my being, this healing, constraining, cleansing touch, these calming, gladdening, elevating powers, these new hopes, these reversed desires, loving all to which I was formerly indifferent and growing dead to all that formerly appealed most strongly to me, — all these things bear upon their very front the signature that they are wrought by a divine hand, and as sure as I am of my own Christian consciousness, so sure am I that all its experiences proclaim their Author and that Christ, who gives me them, is in God." (*Maclaren.*)

Knowing Jesus, however, is *loving Him*. St. Paul was an enemy of Christ, persecuting Him until he learned to know Him on the Damascus road. Jesus' statement: "I have loved you." "Ye are My friends." Paul: Gal. 2, 20: "who loved me and gave Himself for me." "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." "He laid down His life for us."

"The mother, wan and pale with incessant vigils by the bedside of a sick child; the fireman, maimed for life in bravely rescuing the inmates of a blazing house; the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae; Howard, dying of fever caught in dungeons where he was fulfilling his noble purpose of succoring the oppressed and remembering the forgotten; the Moravian missionaries, who voluntarily incarcerated themselves in an African leper-house (from which regress into the healthy world was impossible and escape only to be effected through the gates of death) in order that they might preach the glad tidings to the lepers, — all these and many other glorious instances of self-devotion do but faintly shadow forth the love of Him who laid aside divine glory and humbled Himself to the death of the cross." (*Foster.*) "We love Him because He first loved us," 1 John 4, 19. "For me to live is Jesus." "Jesus, Lover of my soul."

And again, *this love is* not an idle emotion and effervescent sentiment, but *a motive and power that shapes our whole lives into obedience to His will and commandments,* vv. 15. 21; 1 John 2, 7; 4, 21; 2 John 5. Love is the foundation of obedience. His commandments may be summed up thus (John 13, 34): "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "Copy Me!" Matt. 11, 29. "Learn of Me!" There is no keeping of Christ's commandments where there is no love of Christ, and there is no love of Christ where there is no faith. "But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened . . . kept me in the true faith."

3.

a) *The world* cannot know, vv. 17. 19. The inability of the world to understand and perceive Christian truths, 1 Cor. 2, 8. 14.

The worldly man lacks that spiritual organ or sense to perceive divine truth. Radio waves are all about us, exerting their influences, but only the receiving-set with glowing tubes, properly tuned, brings tones and song to our ear. The Kaffir in the jungle is not equipped to understand Einstein's equations. With our power of vision we cannot see the trans-Neptunian planet.

b) *Do we* receive all the comfort of the Comforter? We, too, have the world with its clouds and fog in our heart. We do not understand, do not always feel the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the answers to our prayers, the joy and cheer in the Holy Ghost. Yet it is all ours. Jesus prays, and the Father gives us the Comforter. We should use the means of grace. Learn ever to know Jesus better, to love Him more, and to keep His commandments, and He will ever increasingly manifest Himself to us.

Blessed Spirit, Comforter,
Sent this day from Christ on high, etc. (Hymn 123, 3.)

O Holy Spirit, enter in
And in our hearts Thy work begin, etc. (Hymn 247, 1.)

H. W. Bartels.

Trinity Sunday.

Matt. 3, 13—17.

To-day is known as Trinity Sunday. This festival divides, as it were, the church-year into two parts. The first is called the festival half of the year. It extends from Advent to Trinity and comprises the high festivals of the Church, the days which tell of Jesus' coming, birth, epiphany, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and of His sending the Holy Ghost. (Here relate how the Christian is to live this part of the year with Jesus by commemorating in a worthy manner these memorable events in the life of Jesus.)

We have just again passed through this part of the church-year and have arrived at the beginning of the last half, which is devoted to the teachings of Jesus. Thus the festival of the Trinity serves to conclude the first and to open for us the second half of the church-year. To bind these two halves together the Church has selected the very comprehensive doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Therefore also the church-body of which we are a member has chosen the text which I read to you, the text which speaks of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Our text tells us —

1. *Of the revelation of the Trinity;*
2. *Of the mystery of the Trinity;*
3. *Of the blessings of the Trinity.*

1.

a) In our text the Trinity is revealed to us; for the First Person, the Father, makes His presence known by speaking from heaven and testifying of Jesus, the Son of Mary: "This is My beloved," etc., v. 17. The Second Person, the Son of God, reveals Himself standing visibly in the waters of Jordan, being baptized of John; while the Third Person, the Holy Ghost, reveals Himself in the form of a dove, descending from heaven and lighting upon Jesus.

What a glorious and impressive revelation of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! But that is by no means the only revelation which God has given us of the three persons of the Godhead.

b) In many places of Holy Writ we hear of these three persons in the one and only true God.

In Creation. The Father, the First Person, spoke the Word. The Word, the Second Person, was the One through whom all things were made, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became incarnate and whose glory the apostles saw in the flesh and we see in the Word, Jesus of Nazareth, John 1, 3. And of the Holy Ghost we read in the sacred record of Creation: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," Gen. 1, 2.

Again, in Num. 6, 22—26 we read that God commanded Moses to tell Aaron, the high priest, to bless the children of Israel in the name of the Three Persons, calling each one Lord. Thus all blessings were to come to God's people through that Triune God who is three in person, but one in essence. From that time, about three thousand years ago, till to-day we still by this very benediction which we pronounce teach and acknowledge the Triune God, for we also say: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace," Num. 6, 22—26.

In the Psalms these three persons are mentioned. For instance, in Ps. 2, 7. 12 the Father and the Son are mentioned. In Ps. 45 the Son of God is exalted as the Bridegroom of the Church; likewise in Ps. 72 and in Ps. 110 He is mentioned. The Holy Spirit is mentioned by the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. 23, 2.

Isaiah also in telling of his vision of God testifies that the one Lord was acclaimed by the threefold cry of holy, holy, holy, Is. 6, 3.

At the very beginning of the New Testament, in the first chapter of Matthew, there is a revelation of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Matt. 1, 18—25. It would delay us too long to quote all the passages of the New Testament where Jesus speaks of the Father and, again, speaks of the Holy Ghost as different persons from Himself. He prays to the Father, "Not My will, but Thine be done," and He declares of the Holy Spirit, "I will send you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. Indeed, this doctrine of the Holy Trinity is so clearly revealed in holy Scripture, so positively and unmistakably taught, that no one can enter the Christian Church who does not know it and accept it, for at the very portals of the Christian Church, the Sacrament by which we enter it is to be performed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, that is, in the name of the Triune God, Matt. 28, 19. St. Paul also in his letters refers to this doctrine, *e. g.,* he concludes his Second Epistle to the Corinthians with the words: 2 Cor. 13, 14.

There is therefore no excuse for any one's deceiving himself by thinking that it is sufficient to acknowledge that there is a God, some God. The one and only true God has clearly revealed Himself as the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and they alone worship the true God who worship this Holy Trinity; and all those who do not believe in this divine revelation and do not worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one being, they are not Christians, but are idolaters. God does not ask us to have our own imaginations concerning Him; but He has shown Himself clearly here in the text and in many other places that we might know Him, the only true God, love Him, serve Him, and worship Him. Therefore we sing the *Gloria Patri* and the *Gloria in Excelsis;* therefore we confess the three Articles of the Creed.

2.

But are there not some difficulties connected with this doctrine? How can there be one being and yet three persons? Indeed, this doctrine of the Triune God is a most mysterious teaching, far beyond our natural understanding or comprehension.

a) Something of this appears also here in our text. Here the Father reveals Himself by a voice coming from heaven. He declares concerning that man Jesus standing there in the water: "This is My beloved Son." Is this not a mystery? Is it not far, far, above our understanding? And the mystery is by no means removed, but rather increased, when we hear that there is a Third Person in union with this Father and Son, and that He shows Himself here in the form of a dove, lighting upon the Son of God. As in simple faith we gaze upon this revelation of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we exclaim with Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" etc., Rom. 11, 33—36.

b) There are those whom this mystery offends. They hesitate to accept the revelation because the mystery seems to them too great. But what is more natural than that God's being should be a mystery to us? In the first place, our own being is a mystery. And then here is the world and the heavens with their myriads of stars. There is that wonderful sun with its light and heat burning for thousands of years, the source of whose fire no scientist or philosopher has ever been able to explain. In ourselves the union between spirit and body — what a mystery! On every hand those who are not dull, stupid, and beastly must, as they see, hear, and contemplate the marvels of God's creation, exclaim: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches, Ps. 104, 24. And again: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, who hast set Thy glory above the heavens! When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Ps. 8. And again: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork," etc., Ps. 19, 1—6. He who has created all these things, who has given to the stars their course and to the sea its power, and who holds the great oceans in the hollow of His hand, who has ordained the seasons of the year, before whom the mightiest men of this earth, the greatest intellects and the men of highest power are but dust and ashes — is it strange that there is a mystery in Him, in His being? Why refuse His definite, clear, unmistakable revelation and Word when out in nature the works of His hands baffle all attempts at explanation?

c) The only wise course for us to pursue is to take the advice of our Good Shepherd and, when facing this mystery of the Trinity as we have it here in the text, become again as little children, so that with childlike faith we may accept what our heavenly Father tells us in His Word. Indeed, we ought to be thankful that God deals with us as with children. He offers us the deepest and greatest mysteries, not that we should solve them, but that we should believe them upon the testimony of His own truthful Word. Let us stand in awe of Him whose very creation fills us with awe, wonder, and admiration. Let us cast down our foolish imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, so that we may in truth and verity begin all our services by singing: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," and by closing them again by singing: "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Indeed, may our hearts at all times be ready to join in that sacred hymn to the Triune God: —

> Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
> All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.
> Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
> God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

3.

The hymn which I just quoted does not only speak of the Trinity, but of the *blessed* Trinity. And that is the third thing to which our text calls attention, namely, the *blessings of the Holy Trinity.*

a) The revelation of the mystery of the Trinity which we find here in our text is not offered to us simply to fill us with consternation and to impress us with the incomprehensible nature of God, but it is offered to us that we may be made partakers of those blessings which the Triune God wishes to bestow upon us. Hearken to what the Father declares. He says of Jesus: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He thereby declares to us all that the Father is the One who is pleased in all that the Son does for us; for we know that this Jesus came into the world for us, not that He should be ministered unto, but that He should minister and give His life a ransom for many. In other words, the Father here reveals Himself as that God of whom Jesus said: "For God so loved the world," etc., John 3, 16. The Father here reveals Himself as the One of whom Jesus said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," the God of mercy, truth, and love, who has provided for us the Savior, of whom the Scripture declares that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance — our Creator indeed, but also the One who draws us to the Son and through the Son to heaven.

b) And here you see the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity being baptized of John. He declares that He wishes to fulfil all righteousness. We know that He did not have to do this for Himself. He had an immutable, eternal righteousness and needed no other. But we know why He is called Jesus; because He should save His people from their sins, Matt. 1, 21. We know why He came unto this earth. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance, Matt. 9, 13 b. This is the Jesus of whom John the Baptist, who was baptizing Him, said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John 1, 29. This is the Jesus of whom not only one or two, but all true prophets of all times, countries, and languages have testified the same thing, Acts 10, 43. O the unsearchable riches of Christ which we find in Jesus for time and for eternity! Cf. 2 Cor. 5, 15—21; Matt. 11, 28.

c) Here we hear of the blessings of the Holy Spirit. He is shown in the form of a dove because through the Gospel the Holy Spirit brings peace to us from heaven, from the highest court, from that Judge from whose sentence no one can appeal, who decides and the matter is decided forever; who gives us power to become the sons of God, to believe in our Savior, and through whose holy inspiration the Triune God enters our heart, lives and dwells there; of whom we say in the Third Article: "who daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life." Through the water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism, which is mentioned here in our text, the Holy Spirit has entered our hearts, made us children of God, is through the Word of God preserving us in faith, and will finally through faith give us the victory over sin, death, and the devil. Brief recapitulation. Hymn 268. S.

First Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 19, 16—26.

Our text tells us of a young man who came to Jesus full of expectancy, but left thoroughly disappointed. This is not an isolated case. John 6, 66; Herod; Luke 23, 8—11; John 6, 14. 15. Even the disciples were in danger of being of this number: Luke 24, 21. Cf.: Matt. 11, 2—6.

Since then untold multitudes have been disappointed in Jesus. For the same reasons to-day many refuse to enter the Church, many leave the Church. Why is this? What are the causes? Our text tells of

Three Obstacles which Block the Way to Heaven.

1.

The first is *legalism or self-righteousness.*

a) The case of this young man. Listen to the claims of this foolish, self-righteous person, vv. 16—20. Luther ridicules this man by writing: "Ring all the bells and come to see this wonderful man who has kept all the commandments from his youth." Of course, this young fool had not even begun to keep the commandments of God, not to speak of keeping them all from his youth.

b) This is the first obstacle which keeps men from heaven, the religion of works or of the Law, which causes men to think that they can earn heaven by their own efforts. But Rom. 3, 23; Job 14, 4; Gen. 8, 21; Ps. 143, 2; 1 John 1, 8. We must cease saying: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are," and learn to say: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Ps. 51, 1—10; Luke 15, 21.

2.

The second obstacle that blocks the road to heaven is *the love of money.*

a) Jesus knew the heart of this young man. He knew that he was a servant of mammon. His outward obedience to the Law he had practised, not to please God, but to gain and safeguard his money. Jesus applies the tests and gets the reaction that reveals the servant of mammon, vv. 21. 22.

What a liar this young man was! Actions speak louder than words. Just now he had claimed to love his neighbor as himself, and immediately thereupon he refused to relieve the suffering of his neighbor, James 2, 15. 16. Such conduct reminds us of Judas, who said: "Hail, Master," and kissed Him and at the same time betrayed that Master. Instead of being an obedient child of God, this young man was a hypocrite. And what made him such? *The love of money.*

b) Let us take to heart what Jesus said after the shame of this inquirer became all too evident, vv. 23. 24. How true what the apostle writes 1 Tim. 6, 10. This love of money made Judas what he was, John 12, 6. Think of Gehazi, 2 Kings 5, 20—27, and of Ahab, 1 Kings 21, 1—26.

Some of the most respectable people live in this shameful sin, Matt. 23, 14. 25.

Let us examine ourselves. Quote and explain the parable, Luke 12, 15—21.

3.

The third obstacle which blocks the road to heaven is *despair of God's power and mercy.*

a) This threatened to take possession of the minds of the disciples. Text, v. 25. When they heard Jesus declare that it is impossible for a rich man to gain heaven by his own or by any mere human effort, they concluded that it is *altogether* impossible. It was this despair which ruined Saul, Ahithophel, Judas, and many more.

b) Jesus must remind them of the fact that what is impossible with man is still possible with God, v. 26. Behold the grace and power of God. There is no sinner whom God cannot save. When men were helplessly lost, God found a way to save them, even the worst of them, by that miracle of all miracles, Is. 7, 14; Luke 1, 37; Rom. 8, 3.

Here, then, is the key which opens the door to heaven for all: John 3, 16; Is. 1, 18.

Away, O sinner, therefore, away with your self-righteousness, away with your carnal love of money, away with your doubt of God's power or mercy. God saved David, Manasseh, Saul of Tarsus. He can and wants to save you.

Consider the case of that persecutor of Christians, Saul, 1 Tim. 1, 15. 16. Be not as that unbeliever mentioned 2 Kings 7, 1—20. Let not unbelief cheat you, Heb. 4, 2. Turn to the Crucified, look to the Lamb of God! Hymn 48, 3—6. Heb. 13, 20. 21. S.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

John 8, 1—11.

Near the close of this Gospel from which our text is taken the writer tells us of his purpose in writing what he wrote. In the last verse of the 20th chapter we read: "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name.

This purpose of the holy writer must always be in our mind when we write and speak of what he wrote. He wrote to make known to us Jesus, to show Him as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. He wrote in order that by his words he might bestow upon us the faith which saves and gives life.

It is true he wrote of many things. He wrote of loaves and fishes. He wrote of Peter and John and Nathanael, of the scribes; he wrote of Jerusalem; he wrote of the poor of Bethesda; he wrote of Lazarus, of Mary and Martha. In the course of his narrative he tells of the folly of the disciples, of the wickedness of the enemies of Christ, of Joseph of Arimathea, and of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night; but in it all he had the same purpose: to make known to us Jesus and to bring us to faith in our Savior and thus to bestow upon us eternal life. This purpose we wish to keep in mind when we read and consider to-day this wonderful text from the eighth chapter of this gospel. It shows us the Good Physician dealing with the only really fatal disease and malady of mankind — sin.

Jesus Dealing with Man's Only Fatal Sickness: Sin.

1. He reveals it; 2. He pardons it; 3. He cures it.

1.

a) The Pharisees, the most respectable people among the Jews, brought a great sinner to Jesus, a woman taken in adultery, in the very act, and they remind Him of the severity of the condemnation of this sin in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God through Moses had given the law that such a transgressor was to be stoned to death. Lev. 20, 10; Deut. 22, 22—24. They failed to make the distinction between the Moral and the Political Law. By the moral law adultery was condemned. But it was a part of the political law of the temporal government of Israel to have such a person put to death. This political law was not in force at the time of Jesus, for the Jews at that time had not their own independent political government, but were subject to Roman law.

However, these men knew something of sin. They knew that adultery is sin, a very grievous sin. They knew that God had pronounced His curse upon this sin. Indeed, all men know something of sin. No men or women can excuse their sin by pleading their ignorance of the Law. The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans declares that through conscience and in nature itself God has revealed His own holiness and the wrong of gross sin, "so that they are without excuse." The very heathen have a conscience, of which the apostle writes in that same letter, chap. 2, 14. 15. But this natural knowledge of God's holiness and of sin's shame has never saved any one from sin. It has alarmed many, alarmed them to such an extent that they have taken refuge in all manner of superstitions. Some, when they see how general this depravity is, simply give way to it and live in all manner of shame, such as the apostle describes in that same epistle in the first chapter. Others hide their sin, cover up their sore, and think that because they can deceive men, they can also deceive God. This knowledge of sin which man has by nature, and which we behold here in these Pharisees, has never produced true godliness. Man needs a more complete revelation of his own guilt and corruption. And Jesus gives that here; He reveals sin to these people.

When these Pharisees brought this sinful woman to Jesus, they felt very righteous and pure and holy in condemning the sin of another. Jesus at first did not answer them at all, but wrote upon the ground. He did this in order that they might have time to consider what they were doing. They were so secure in their self-righteousness. He wished to have them come to their senses. But when they continued vociferously to insist on some answer, He said: "He that is without sin," etc., v. 7. Whereupon we read: v. 9.

Jesus had revealed their sin to these men. He showed them their own image. Suddenly it dawned upon them that they themselves were unclean. They were indeed worse than this woman. In the secret of their hearts they were full of uncleanness, and yet they had wished to play the pure and holy saints by putting to public shame a sinful fellow-being. She was a sinner, but they surpassed her in sin, for they were hypocrites and cruel persecutors.

b) Just so Jesus reveals sin to all of us. Read His explanation of the Law, Matt. 5, 17—30. How He exposes the shame of the human heart! Where is the upright person that will hear these words and then declare himself or herself innocent and free from sin? God's Word convinces the whole world of sin and transgression.

We also must confess that Jesus uncovers our sinful heart and convinces us that we are all as an unclean thing and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

But Jesus does not do that for the purpose for which the Pharisees published the shame of this poor woman. Jesus does not publish our sin to others; He reveals it to us. He does this not to put us to shame, but to save us from our sin, its woe, and its curse.

2.

a) Note how He deals with this sinful woman, vv. 10. 11. Do not think that Jesus made little of her sin. He expressed His detestation of this and all sins at other times, *e. g.*, Matt. 18, 6—9. But this woman had felt the *curse* of sin and was penitent. Jesus therefore pardons her sin. He had the right to do this, for He Himself was to suffer the entire punishment of her transgression.

b) Just so Jesus pardoned the sins of other penitent sinners. He removed their guilt by taking it upon Himself, John 1, 29; Is. 53, 6; Rom. 5, 6—8. With His own life and blood He paid for this pardon. He therefore has the best right to bestow it upon poor penitent sinners. And He did bestow it upon them, Matt. 9, 2; 11, 28; John 20, 21; 1 Tim. 1, 15. 16.

c) Nor has He ceased to do this. He gave this power to all His disciples, John 20, 22. 23; 2 Cor. 5, 19. 20.

He has taught us to pray the Fifth Petition that He may grant us our prayer. In Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, in Absolution, and in the Gospel He gives forgiveness of sin to all who seek His grace. Thus He bestows upon us that peace with God which passes all understanding, Rom. 5, 1.

What a precious gift that is! Rom. 8, 31. 32.

This treasure is also offered to you to-day. Be sure that you lay hold of it. Faith secures its infinite riches, Acts 16, 31.

It would almost seem that nothing more could be added to our riches after Jesus gives us forgiveness, for this forgiveness means God's favor, blessing, and heaven. But our text speaks of an additional gift: Jesus cures our sin.

3.

Jesus does not only speak pardon to this crushed sinner, but He tells her: "Go and sin no more," v. 11. He had not forgiven her sin that she might continue to sin with impunity, but that she should now live a new life to Him who died for her. 2 Cor. 5, 15. That is the wonderful and precious grace of Jesus, that, as He gives us pardon, He, with it, in His word of forgiveness, bestows upon us also the gift of the Holy Ghost, Gal. 3, 2. And where this Holy Spirit of Christ enters, there a work of holiness begins. He, the Spirit of God, will teach us to say to God: "Abba, Father," and live the life of a child of God, Gal. 4, 6.

True it is, the complete and perfect victory over our sinful nature is not bestowed upon us at once, Phil. 3, 12. But the true spiritual fight against sin begins in our hearts. Jesus as the Good Physician has charge of us. He is feeding us with the Bread of Life, He is quenching our thirst with the Water of Life. The Good Shepherd guides us in the paths of righteousness. He holds us, helps us, defends us, carries us from strength to strength, while we are fighting the good fight, till finally in heaven He makes His cure complete. Ps. 17, 15; 2 Tim. 1, 12; Phil. 4, 19; 3, 20. 21. —

You have this fatal disease — sin. If it is not dealt with or if you allow a quack to deal with it, it will end where Dives ended or, rather, never ended. All other helpers will administer poison and lead you to death and destruction. Sin is the disease for which there is only one true physician — Jesus.

There is but one who can help you — Jesus, Acts 4, 11; John 14, 6. S.

Third Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 15, 11—32.

We have before us one of the best-known and one of the best-loved of the Master's parables. It has been called "the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture." It is vivid and realistic. It carries in it the proof of divine authorship. It is our God and Creator who speaks to us here. No man could have invented this parable. The Son of God portrays human nature as it is, because He is the Creator of it and knows its corruption better than man himself. In this parable He pictures to us the love of His Father for penitent prodigals and the rejoicing over the finding of the lost. It sounds the deep depths of human misery and sin, and it reaches up into the sublime heights of divine love and pity. We see sin at its worst and love at its best.

The Story of the Lost Son.

1. We see sin at work. *2. We see love at work.*

1.

A) Sin wants license, vv. 11—13.

The young man, dissatisfied at home, wants to get away from parental restraint, asks for his inheritance, receives it, and soon afterward is leaving home on his way to some distant city.

Picture his high spirits — now he would live; he is care-free; his heart is light and gay; his purse is full; he will be able to do as he pleases; he is free! He is in the "fool's paradise."

How often do we find a growing son or a growing daughter wanting to get away from home, away from a father's and a mother's supervision, to come and go as he pleases! The young think that is life and liberty.

Thus sin works. Sin wants no restraint; sin wants license. Sin wants no accountability to God; sin wants to be free to do as it likes. Thus the sinner throws off the divine yoke; ignores God's Law; wants no supervision. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." What a shameful infatuation! Thus Eve finally forgot all the glory of her real God-given Paradise and saw only the forbidden fruit. In that, and in that alone, she thought there was happiness. Satanic delusion!

B) Sin brings ruin, vv. 14—16.

1) The young man now finds himself away from home. Picture the gay life. He loved the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," etc., 1 John 2, 15—17. He wastes his substance in riotous living. Pen and picture have portrayed in glaring color this part of the parable. Oh, what a freedom — high-balls, harlots, hell! "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red," etc., Prov. 23, 31—33.

Thus it is in actual life, and that is sin at its worst. When a man or a woman, young or old, flings restraint, common decency, honor, accountability to God, to the winds and wastes substance, health, and money in sinful indulgence, that spells ruin for body and soul.

You know how sin can ruin man, how it can rob him of his possessions, strip him of his health, deprive him of his honor, stain his name, and bring his soul to hell. Let a man ignore God's Law, let a man throw off the restraints that God places upon us, and he is headed for destruction.

One who seeks freedom in sin finds slavery of the worst kind, temporal and eternal. Sin leaves a man by the wayside of life, a wreck and a ruin. Sin wastes a man's substance and strength and ruins his name. It wrecks his life, it sears his conscience. It destroys his soul and leaves him friendless and homeless like the prodigal among the pigs. Lust wastes faculties, friends, and the future. It reduces to spiritual poverty and need, and no man can help, and no man can help himself.

2) In company with the swine. He was a Hebrew, who had been taught from youth to abhor this animal as unclean. How the Gentile gloated over the young Jew, to see him do this shameful work! And how this young man smarted under the humiliation to be with the swine! And no soul to give him a kind word or a morsel of food. What a fool he had been! How sin does destroy, ruin, curse, blight! He now thinks of what he had, what his father's servants had, and what was his lot now. Judas with a rope alone in the dark. Ahithophel, honored of David, now despised of that fool Absalom.

Application. — Has Satan enticed you? Is he tempting you? Note what is said here of sin and its work of ruin.

I care not who you are or what your sin may be. No matter how black, how marred, how ugly, your soul. No matter how godless, devilish, outrageous, beastly, that sin, do not let it drive you to despair and eternal ruin. Do not stay in it. Come to yourself!

This parable tells you of the way to escape, of *love at work.* To this we shall now give attention.

2.

A) The first ray of hope in the breast of the prodigal son was the remembrance of his father's home. Even in remembrance, God's Gospel is effective. It awakens the sinner, it draws him to the Father. Oh, how good to be at home! The prodigal arises and goes there. It is the Father's love at work in that soul, John 3, 16. The sinner feels his burden and unworthiness, but yet he trusts the word of the calling Father: Matt. 11, 28. He prays: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." He prays: Ps. 51, 7—12. Can you not see the prodigal plodding along, wondering and hoping against hope as with bated breath he goes on? He is praying: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." (Hymn 318, 3.)

B) But who is running toward him? His father; the man whose money he wasted; the man whose name he shamed; the man whose home he left — his father. What will he say? What will he do? Has he heard his whole sad story? The father rushes toward him, — with uplifted staff to smite, to punish? No. With uplifted arms to embrace and to forgive. The father embraces and kisses his wayward boy, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Oh, how could it be otherwise? That is love at work.

The young man, even amid such an unexpected and undeserved reception, fails not to make his confession: v. 21. He would remind his father that he is unworthy of such affection and love. No need to add: "Make me as one of thy hired servants."

C) Love rejoices, vv. 22—24.

The father turns to his servants, who followed him out of the house, and bids them bring forth the best robe, etc. Love at work — not a warm, hearty, and loving embrace and then a place with the servants. Love really rejoices, is sincerely happy, over the return of the erring and the fallen.

Application. — Here we have a picture of the love of God for the returning wanderer and of the joy in heaven over the sinner who repents.

We left the sinner before determined to return to God. When the sinner comes back to God in his tatters and rags, wasted and ruined in health, famished and parched in soul, what will God say, what will He do? Listen to the voice of Jesus: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"And whosoever cometh,
I will not cast him out."
O welcome voice of Jesus!
It drives away our doubt,
It calls us very sinners,
Unworthy though we be
Of love so free and boundless,
To come, dear Lord, to Thee!

God will receive the returning prodigal as did the father in the parable. Is God not a father? Is man not the work of the Creator? "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." When they come to Him for whom Christ died, will He not receive them? God will receive the sinner as a son. The Father will take off from the returning sinner the filthy garments of sin and throw over him the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness; and He will put on his finger a ring, signifying wealth, position, honor, a son's place; and He will lead him, the prodigal, the outcast, the sinner, into the great banquet hall of heaven, where there will be rejoicing and gladness over the sinner who by His grace has left the far country of sin and has come back to God.

Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek a Father's melting heart;
His pitying eyes thy grief discern,
His hand shall heal thine inward smart.

Return, O wanderer, return;
Thy Savior bids thy spirit live.
Go to His bleeding feet and learn
How freely Jesus can forgive.

Sinners, mark the word recorded 1 John 1, 9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

D) Vv. 25—30. Does any one envy the forgiven sinner? Is thine eye evil because God is so good and gracious? Beware lest you be found among the Pharisees, saying: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." The worst of us may find mercy, and the best of us need it as much as the worst. This parable is spoken to the best of us.

And there may *I, as vile as he,*
Wash all my sins away.

Conclusion. — As we close our study of the story of the lost son, let the prodigal brother be a warning to us of what sin can do to man. Let the father's love call forth in us a tenderness of heart toward sinners generally and returning penitents in particular, that shows itself in sincere rejoicing. Let the envious brother put us on our guard against pharisaism, hard-heatedness, and an unforgiving spirit.

May the whole parable be a constant reminder of the love and compassion and forgiveness and blessing which the heavenly Father showers upon all sinners who come back to Him and a reminder of the rejoicing in heaven over the sinner who repents.

All praise and honor and glory be unto Christ Jesus, crucified and risen, who has made it possible for prodigals and Pharisees to find pardon and peace! Amen. R. Ressmeyer.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 7, 1—6.

Our text is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Of what He preached in that sermon Christ said: Matt. 7, 24—27. It is a wise man who is obedient to the will of Christ. We endanger our soul's salvation when we are not bringing forth in every particular the fruit of faith. But, sad to say, many are inclined to disregard the will of the Lord. We hear of such inconsistency found in the lives of Christian men and women in our text. Our theme is: —

Judging Others.

Judging others is

1. Forbidden by Christ; 2. Dangerous; 3. Inconsistent.

1.

This does not apply to judges, of course, or to those whose position makes it necessary for them to judge — parents, teachers, pastors, etc. Luther says: "But, lest we stumble at this preaching and misunderstand it as if hereby it were altogether forbidden to judge and pass sentence, it is clear from what has often been said above, that Christ is preaching here only to his disciples and is not at all speaking of the judgment or punishment that must occur in the world, as father and mother at home among the children and servants must judge, rebuke, and also chastise if they will not do right. Thus, a prince or a judge, if he means to discharge his duty properly, cannot do otherwise than to punish. That belongs to secular government, which has nothing to do with us. Therefore we will not interfere with how things should go in that sphere. But here we are speaking of another kingdom that does not indeed weaken or annul the other, namely, spiritual life and being among Christians." Christ refers to the judging one of another in every-day life. Christ forbids the judging of the neighbor, the fellow-Christian, etc., his every word and deed and motive. It is the judging of each other that is condemned in the Eighth Commandment; the failure to "put the best construction on everything," which means "charitably covering our neighbor's faults, etc." (Qu. 72 in the Catechism.) This is not to be confused with, nor does it annul, the procedure laid down in Matt. 18. The fact that judging the deeds and motives of others is forbidden by Christ and in the Law of God should be for the Christian sufficient reason for abstaining from such practise. Christ says in our text, "Judge not." Christ forbids judging, and that must settle it for the Christian. James warns against it in his epistle, Jas. 4, 11. 12.

It may be hard to overcome this inclination to judge. It is so human. But whatever Christ commands us to do He helps us to accomplish. Let no disciple say, I cannot stop judging others; that is my nature. Christ says, "Judge not." Therefore the Christian must overcome this weakness, this tendency, this desire, this sin, and the Christian can count on Christ to help him. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Many do not try to overcome their weaknesses. Many do not go to Christ as they should for help and strength and determination to overcome this evil inclination and practise of judging which conforms not to the will of Christ. But for one who was washed in the blood of the Lamb and is clothed in the righteousness of Jesus there is only one thing to do, and that is, not to judge men and motives.

2.

A) Reverts back.

Our text says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." As a man soweth, so shall he also reap. Judging others works as a boomerang.

a) The natural consequence of habitual judging of others is that others judge you.

b) In judging others, a man usually judges himself, Rom. 2, 1. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing." Those who judge the actions of others often forget for the moment that they themselves have the same faults and commit the same sins. Thus in judging others they condemn themselves.

c) God judges him who judges. Rom. 2, 3: "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

A woman once told a pastor that she did not like the passage in the Bible "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." It was evident that she felt that when she judged others, she laid herself open to judgment and condemnation.

B) It harms.

Many an ill report about some one has caused untold damage.

a) If some one has sinned and you are offended, then go to him in all humility and love as laid down in Matt. 18.

b) The trouble is that the judging in little things (mote) is often done behind the back and in malice and envy, instead of in love, and is passed on and frequently works irreparable harm. Rom. 14, 10—13.

3.

A) With our Christian profession.

Christ calls one who judges others a hypocrite, v. 5. It is unloving, unkind, unchristian. 1 Pet. 4, 8: "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." 1 Cor. 13, 7: "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." We are to love one another, we are to love our neighbor as we love ourself. Uncharitable judging is out of harmony with such love. How unbecoming to a Christian is this hasty and nasty judging! God does not enter into judgment with the repentant believer, and he who is shown such goodness and love at the hands of God should not judge others. It reveals vanity, jealousy, egotism, pride. Condemnation of others is often done in ignorance of all the facts. A Christian should be ever "suspending judgment." That must be the perpetual practise of a disciple of Christ. How unchristlike this attitude "I do not want to judge him, but . . ."

B) In the face of our own practises.

Christ brings that out very directly and forcibly in referring to the mote and the beam. How prone we are to see faults and failings in others and slow to recognize identical or similar or even worse shortcomings and sins in ourselves! How quick we are to see sins in others and to see sin even where there is no sin, but so frequently blind to our own sins! Christians minifying their own glaring faults and iniquities and magnifying their neighbor's lesser frailties!

We find Christians condemning the apparent illiberality in giving on the part of others, while they themselves could give much more. We find Christians judging others for their lack of activity and interest in the Lord's work, when they themselves are doing little or nothing. We find members of one society in the church criticising another society for not doing more, not appreciating what the society is doing nor being fully acquainted with its objects and forgetting some of its past activities and accomplishments. We find Christians who would not think of stealing, gossip; Christians who would not think of swearing, but — what a temper they display! Christians who would not think of staying home from church, but — how miserly they are! There is a lot of lopsided Christianity in the disciples of Jesus Christ. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone at her." Like the Pharisee some so-called Christians thank God that they are not as other men are, etc., but they forget the weightier matters of love and mercy. A Christian should first eliminate from his own life and practise all that is wrong and sinful and contrary to God's Law, and then he will be the better able to help others to walk more as it becomes a disciple of Christ. Most of us will be so busy taking the beam out of our own eye, remedying our own life, striving to overcome our besetting sin, endeavoring to be faithful and loyal to Him who bought us with His blood, that we shall have neither time nor inclination to sit in judgment over others. And giving attention to our own faults and failings, being conscious of our own shortcomings and evil tendencies and transgressions, our judgment of others will be tempered with love and patience. And if by the grace of God we are gaining in godliness and improving with the help of the Holy Spirit in our own spiritual life, we will help our erring brother in all humility and charity.

Conclusion. — Brethren, what a severe arraignment of our sin! Let us turn from such shameful inclination and sin. Let us seek forgiveness and strive to conquer our corrupt nature. Let it cost what it will, we must avoid the sin against which our Lord warns us in these words. Even though the removal of the beam out of our own eye before judging others is contrary to the practise of the scoffer and enemy of Christ, it must ever remain the purpose of the Christian to abstain from uncharitable judging of the motives and deeds of others and assiduously to apply himself to the task of perfecting his own life, so that he may be a real salt in the earth and a real light in the world and a real help to the weak Christian. Hymn 342.

R. Ressmeyer.

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

John 1, 43—51.

There are many ways by which God's Gospel is brought to sinners. Some hear it from their parents; some through friends; some have read the Bible to refute it and were overpowered by its truth; some came to church from curiosity or by a mere chance, as it is called, at a funeral perhaps. St. Augustine went to hear Ambrose because he was a very good and eloquent speaker, but little by little what Ambrose said drew Augustine to Jesus.

To us Christians these narratives are interesting and important. We have one in our text.

Finding Jesus.

1. Possible to-day, 2. A great blessing, 3. Brings obligations.

1.

A) Possible to-day in His Word.

Tell how Jesus found Philip and Philip found Nathanael; how Philip testified: "We have found Him of whom Moses, in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph," vv. 43—45.

We think of the supposed advantages of having lived at the time of Jesus, of the opportunity and experience of finding Jesus as the apostles found Him. Let us remember that not all who had the opportunity of seeing Jesus found Him. Many gathered about Him, multitudes pressed upon Him, crowds saw His miracles and heard His utterances, but how few really found Jesus!

It is not necessary for Christ to be present visibly in order that men may find Him. He is to be found in His *Word,* His *Gospel.* As Philip testified: "We have found Him of *whom Moses, in the Law, and the prophets* did write." Some of these or other passages might be quoted with profit: Gen. 3, 15; 22, 18; 26, 4; 49, 10; Deut. 18, 15; Ps. 16, 10; Ps. 22; Is. 7, 14; 9, 6; chap. 53; Jer. 23, 5; Micah 5, 2; Zech. 6, 12; 9, 9. Christ is to be found in His Word. "Search the Scriptures . . . they are they which testify of Me," says Christ. When men are skeptical, we can do no better than to urge them to read the Word and see for themselves. Nathanael was skeptical, vv. 46—48.

Men found Christ in His words. "Never man spake like this man." "He spake as one having authority and not as the scribes." Men believed in Him because of His Word: the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, John 4; Nicodemus. Men found Christ in His miracles. Never man wrought such miracles. "And His disciples believed on Him." "Many believed on Him." Men found Christ in His death. Never man died like this man. The thief: "Lord, remember me," etc. The centurion: "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Jesus' words are recorded, His miracles are recorded, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension, and men reading His Word are finding Christ to-day in this Book of God. John 20, 30: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this Book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."

The skeptic may clamor for further proof. Recall the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," Luke 16, 31. Note also 1 Cor. 1, 21—24.

Let doubting men investigate as Nathanael did. He asked

Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see." Nathanael went and saw and was convinced. Nicodemus investigated and found Jesus. Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur,* writes: "After six years given to the impartial investigation of Christianity as to its truth and falsity, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior of the world, and my personal Savior." John 7, 17.

B) Finding of Jesus Made Difficult.

In some quarters men are holding up a false Christ; men interpret Christ instead of letting Christ speak for Himself. Men veil Christ in their own fancies. Men hold up before the world a distorted Christ. Men deny Christ's claims to deity and Saviorhood, telling us that they can gain perfection by right thinking and right living; and it is hard for people to find the real Christ of God, the real Christ of the Bible, the real Christ of Moses and the prophets. Some one obtained beliefs of 700 clergymen. He records the beliefs of 500 ministers and 200 theological students. Of the Baptists who sent in answers, 20 per cent. do not believe in the Virgin Birth, 25 per cent. do not believe that Jesus' death on the cross was the one act which made possible the remission of man's sin; 76 per cent. of the Congregationalists do not believe in the Virgin Birth, 80 per cent. do not believe in the atonement; 46 per cent. of the Methodists do not believe in the Virgin Birth, 40 per cent. do not believe in the atonement. With such error in the pulpit, it is made hard for men in the pew to find Jesus Christ.

Application. — 1) Let us be sure to sit under the ministry of one who brings us to Jesus through the true Gospel. 2) What a call to lift up our voices in preaching the true Christ, supporting the preaching of the true Gospel at home and abroad, ourselves speaking to others, urging them to search the Scriptures, inviting them to come to our church, thus bringing them under the influence of the Word and Spirit of God! Where Christ is held up, men will find Him to-day.

2.

When Nathanael found Jesus, he found a King and the Son of God, v. 49. What a blessing! And Nathanael was to behold still greater things than Christ's omniscience, vv. 50. 51. Man has made many wonderful discoveries. Man discovered America; man invented printing; man discovered the power of steam; man discovered electricity, and we have the telegraph, the telephone, the wireless, the radio, and television. Man invented the horseless carriage and the airplane. How these discoveries have revolutionized industry and will continue to do so, expediting transportation and communication! How these finds have brought distant lands near! How they have brought joy to millions of hearts! But put them all together, and they have not done for the whole world and all humanity what the finding of Jesus does for one individual soul. Finding Jesus revolutionizes a man's life — Zacchaeus; it changes his whole outlook — Paul, Luther; it removes sin — penitent thief; it brings heaven to his door; it establishes communication with the unseen God; it makes it possible for him to draw on the resources of omniscience and omnipotence; it relieves his consciousness of the weight and guilt of sin; it frees him from the power of sin, Satan, and the world. When men have found Christ, they have found the Father and heaven. (This may be elaborated.) Matt. 16, 26.

When a sinner, weary and heavy laden, struggling under the weight of sin, staggers on and on, wild-eyed, despair lining his face, and then at the foot of the cross he finds Christ, the Savior, what a blessing! When a burden-troubled, crushed soul, dejected, oppressed, depressed, goes in the name of Jesus and finds a compassionate, sympathetic, kindly, generous, benevolent Father, what a blessing!

"Thou shalt see greater things than these. Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," v. 51. In Jesus' life Nathanael did see greater things than Jesus' display of omniscience. His intercourse with His Father, His miracles, etc., did reveal to Nathanael His power and majesty and glory and deity.

Does not a man, after coming to Christ, after finding Jesus and fellowshiping with Him, have still greater blessings and enjoy greater manifestations of divine love, and power, and grace, and goodness, and mercy? Does he not see gradually how "all things work together for good to them that love God"? He is strengthened in the inner man; he overcomes Satan; he conquers his besetting sin; he begins to love his enemies; he makes sacrifices he never would have dreamed of before. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Oh, what a blessing when a man finds Jesus!

3.

"Finding Christ" brings with it obligations. Philip went and sought Nathanael, v. 45; Nathanael confessed Christ, saying, "Thou art the Son of God," v. 49; Philip and Nathanael and the other disciples followed Him.

Having found Christ, what shall I do with Him? There is only one thing a truly repentant sinner can do, and that is to serve Him. Seek to bring others to Him. Confess Him and follow Him.

A. Obligation to bring others.

That relative you live with, have you spoken to him or to her about Christ? That man you work with, that friend you frequently visit, have they found Christ? What are you doing to help them find Him? It is said of Spurgeon that "the conversion of the sinner was the dream of all his days." That is the kind of dream to have.

Do we carry the unsaved, the unchurched, the unbeliever, to God in prayer? Does his pitiable condition concern us or not? If we have found the Savior, really found Him, then we shall directly and indirectly want to bring others to Him. The early Church was increased by personal evangelism. Shall we not do more of this bringing others to Christ? "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," is Christ's command. Are we personally doing that, or are we shifting our responsibility and obligation?

B. Obligation to confess Christ.

A true follower of Christ must confess Him as Nathanael did, "Thou art the Son of God." Think of claiming to have found Jesus and then denying His deity. And we must confess Him before men when time and opportunity demand. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men," etc. One who has really found Christ will not be ashamed to confess Him by word and *deed*. Beware lest it be said of you: Rom. 2, 24!

In our day also there is need of clear, personal, individual testimony. When religion is discussed in the office, over the lunch table, in the family circle, in the social group, do we bear witness that Christ is God and King of kings? When Satan and sin are being served in the business world, in the neighborhood by others, do we confess Christ by refusing to do the wrong and standing up for Jesus?

C. Obligation to follow Christ.

When we have found Jesus, we are willing to follow Him withersoever He leads us. The narrow way is lonely, steep, dangerous; but having found Christ, we always desire to walk it. If we have found Jesus, our Savior, Shepherd, Friend, our God, we shall want to follow Him; indeed, we should be unhappy if we did not follow Him.

Savior, I follow on, guided by Thee,
Seeing not yet the hand that leadeth me.
Hushed be my heart and still,
Fear I no further ill;
Only to meet Thy will
My will shall be.

Savior, I long to walk closer with Thee;
Led by Thy guiding hand, ever to be
Constantly near Thy side,
Quickened and purified,
Living for Him who died
Freely for me.

Application. — Many people would enjoy the blessings of finding Jesus, but they are loath to meet the obligations. When we keep the blessings before us which Christ has merited for us, the least we can do is to be faithful to Him, seek to bring others to Him, constantly confess Him, and loyally follow Him.

Conclusion. — Hymn 51. But if you have found Him, then thank God and cling to Him. Hymn 88, 2.

Let us in word and deed hold up before men the true Christ, the Son of God, the only Savior of the world. Let us proclaim to others: Acts 26, 29. R. RESSMEYER.

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 18, 1—14.

Lovely, familiar picture — Jesus placing a child in the midst of His disciples, and teaching them *humility.* — Humility often belittled by moralist writers of high standing, some who have set up lists of "best writers," excluding those (*e. g.,* St. Augustine) who advocate humility. They consider humility harmful to human progress.—True, there is a false humility, humility in words and gestures only, which is most repulsive. And true humility is very rare. But Scripture throughout emphatic: 1 Pet. 5, 5; and Jesus in our text teaches humility so impressively that all may learn.

True Humility.

1. Its importance. *2. The service to which it impels.*

1.

Our text, like all texts, gains additional light from the context, the circumstances under which words were spoken. Clearly indicated, pointing back through chap. 17 to 16, 13. Peter's fine confession of faith, v. 16. Then vv. 17—19. There Peter certainly received a great distinction. Six days later: chap. 17, 1—3. Peter among the three who were granted this look into heaven and privileged to hear those heavenly words: v. 5; and only what Peter then said is recorded. Certainly Peter again received great distinction. Then when Jesus and His disciples returned to Capernaum, tax collectors approached Peter, and Jesus transacted the affair through Peter in a most miraculous manner. Again it was Peter who was particularly distinguished. We do not wonder then that: Mark 9, 34b. Imagination readily pictures the various sides of that dispute. Confused notions of kingdom of heaven. Who the greatest, who leader? Peter, James, John ("whom Jesus loved")? Some doubtless without envy. Others may have felt hurt. Iscariot angry? What thoughts within Peter? Pride or apprehension? Remember that directly after the praise given him chap. 16, 17—19 he had received a very severe rebuke, v. 23. Moreover, Jesus foretold, not only His own suffering, but also that of His disciples, v. 24. However vaguely Peter understood this, being confused, he must have had also serious misgivings. Such and other thoughts the disciples discussed. Then chap. 18, 1. Then Mark 9, 33b. Reproof in that question. Laid bare the folly, vanity, ignorance, pride, selfishness, of their hearts. Thereupon Jesus sat down, Mark 9, 35a; for here was an occasion for a serious lesson. Take time, learn well. Gospel cause not served with present mind of disciples.

Now Jesus says: *Mark 9, 35b!* To make this unforgettable, Jesus resorts to an object-lesson, a picture-lesson, Matt. 18, 2. Impressively: v. 3! His tone remarkably severe: "Except ye turn around." Complete change. Vanity, conceit, desire to rule, to be distinguished, is fatal to true religion. Those who are controlled by these sins will not even enter heaven, let alone be greatest there. And v. 4: "humble himself as a little child." How difficult for saint as well as sinner! Not merely in appearance, — loathsome, — but in spirit and in truth. Such humility as great as it is rare.

Here let us all learn a lesson on the importance of humility. Meant for us, too. Beware lest we look down upon the disciples in their weakness. Thoughts of pride and selfish rivalry with us often for far less reasons than they had. We are not so apt to ask: v. 1 ("kingdom of heaven"), but who is greatest now and here — in office, honor, power. Keep in mind picture of child Jesus set in the midst of His disciples. This child certainly did not consider itself greater than the disciples, though at the time, in God's sight, it was. Jesus: v. 3. 4. Yea, Lord Jesus, correct us, wash us, teach us true humility!

2.

But true humility does not spell *inaction.* Bear in mind that Jesus began this memorable instruction with Mark 9, 35b. The truly humble man recognizes his obligations to all mankind, the truly humble Christian wants to help his fellow-men on the way to heaven. He serves the better because he lacks conceit. Is great, but does not rate himself that way. Do not credit yourself with humility if you refuse to serve. Do not — if you merely sit back and criticize those who do serve. And if you say: "Matters not if I am last," is that humility or indifference and a spirit far from that of Christ?

But let us learn from Jesus of the service that humility implies. Jesus now (Mark 9, 36b) took that child lovingly in His arms and said: Matt. 18, 5. Oh, let us set ambition aside and turn to the children and all who are in lowly circumstances, the poor to whom Jesus preaches the Gospel. And note how Jesus in the whole following discourse emphasizes each one of these little ones. They are His beloved lambs. Receive them in His name; He died for them as well as for you. Your brethren. Joint heirs.

And now, in sad and solemn language: v. 6. Beware lest your selfish, haughty ambition, by neglect or actual affront, place a stumbling-stone before *one* of them on their way to heaven. Better far, before you incur such a guilt, that men should put a large millstone, the kind it took an ass to turn, about your neck and drown you in the sea where it is deepest.

Jesus says of the little children: "They believe in Me," *sc.,* by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. How He prizes the faith of each one of them! — Oh, the world is full of offenses due to ruthless striving. All the history of the world a succession of misery brought on that way. That great guilt and its dreadful punishment caused Jesus to cry: vv. 7—9. Jesus here does not teach self-mutilation. Without hand, foot, and eye you would still be selfish, proud, ruthless. But how impressively He teaches severest self-discipline over against conceit and selfish and inconsiderate striving! All this in the interest of humble *service.* He continues: v. 10 ("one"). Your heavenly Father in His immense government has no greater concern than for *each one* of these — for them rather than for gilded halls; for them rather than for you if you strive for distinction. Merest bauble, that. Jesus pictures His Father as requiring a daily account from His angels concerning each one of "these little ones." And consider v. 11 — the *lost,* whom men consider hopeless, worthless. Bruised reed, smoking flax. Can you be employed in greater service? But it is the service of humility. Says Jesus: vv. 12. 13 ("one!"). The *love* of *Jesus* craves each one of them. Selfish ambition is a stranger to that. Humility learns it. And against all argument mark the earnest *command* of God: v. 14 ("the *will — one*").

We have had an important lesson from Jesus. Importance of humility. The service it renders. Seek it. Pray the Fifth and the Sixth Petition. You need God's pardon, and you need the leading of the Good Shepherd. Pray God for it. Amen. H. M. ZORN.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 18, 15—22.

Our text the immediate continuation of last Sunday's; hence recall connection. Upon dispute as to who is greatest, Jesus taught essential importance of humility and of humble service, to help any and every one of the lowly and the lost, even as vv. 11. 14. Particularly did Jesus warn against giving offense, placing stumbling-stones on way to heaven for any of the least either by bad example or selfish neglect.

Here the thought arises: What if the offense comes from the other side, if it is the brother that sins and sets the bad example? Guilt then is his. Any responsibility on my part? Jesus teaches —

Humble Christian Service to the Sinning Brother.

1. Seeking to win him from his evil way;
2. Always being ready to forgive.

1.

Debt of humble love never ceases. If brother sins, do not say: None of my business; do not at once judge; do not despise, hate; do not slander. But v. 15. Bear in mind vv. 3. 14. In that humble love, concerned about his welfare, go to him alone. That private talk, if instinct with love and obedience to God's Word, has much weight. And if he hears, you have gained the brother! Any labor ever better repaid? — V. 16a. Like-minded Christians. The agreement of two or three such people carries additional weight with the brother's conscience. In humble love do you two or three seek the soul of the brother. This step is altogether necessary also in case your loving efforts should meet with disappointment again, v. 16b; for no community, and certainly not a church, dare listen to gossip, slander. Every charge must be proven. One man's speech against another does not count. One testimony then offsets the other, and the church must then reprove the accuser. But if the brother persists in sin, rejects admonition of two or three, then v. 17a. The church is the community of fellow-Christians to which the brother belongs. The church! See how Jesus extols the church as the highest court and its sentence above that of any worldly seat of judgment. The world's judges are not controlled by Word of God. They have other, unchristian, often antichristian, standards. Your concern is of the conscience, of the soul. Hence "to the church." (Sometimes also among Christian friends it becomes necessary to determine what law of land says on point in question, *e. g.*, property, inheritance. Friendly suit then. But on moral questions, in cases of conscience, faith, eternal life, only God's Word counts, and only Christians can judge how it applies to case.) — Only then, after v. 16 has failed, tell it to the church and its pastor; and when they, even though all admonished such a one, have failed (v. 17b), then regard him as one who has lost faith. Then you have exhausted every means to regain him. Possibly now, when he has by the congregation been so earnestly told of his damnable condition, he will repent. Then, O then, rejoice and be very ready to forgive, for all along this only has been your purpose and that of the congregation.

At this point Jesus, with the language He employed on particularly solemn occasions, continued: v. 18. Only a few days before He had said the same thing to Peter, chap. 16, 19; and you see here that this was not to be an exclusive privilege of Peter, but is the power of the whole Church, and of Peter as a member of it.

The Church is the congregation of believers, who faithfully obey

God's Word and Spirit. Jesus' Word is valid even when it is spoken by mere men, and when a congregation in obedience to His Word says to the plainly impenitent: Your sin will damn you, then that is true before God in heaven. When it says to the penitent: Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven, then that is true. A church acting arbitrarily, unjustly, capriciously, by personal prejudice and preference, is not such a church of which Jesus here speaks, but a synagog of Satan. O may we prize the Word of Jesus and the brotherly admonition in a Christian congregation! It is designed by God Himself for the salvation of the sinning brother. No organization on earth is so near and dear to the heart of Jesus as a group of Christians, however small, who meet in prayerful agreement and obedience to His Word, intent upon helping their sinning brethren. Of them He says: v. 19. 20. Before the Father in heaven that little gathering counts more than many splendid assemblies in stately halls, more than the loudly heralded opinions of the masses, more than the ambitious schemes and doings of the mighty. Are not those two or three in agreement with the Father's own earnest concern for the soul of the lost and the lowly? And Jesus is in their midst, with a special measure of His Spirit. Thus when your brother sins, it is the part of humble Christian love to seek to win him from his evil way.

2.

Peter had listened closely. His conscience was touched. However vaguely he may have understood the full import, this he perceived: *This requires a forgiving disposition.* Plain to him: Such "church discipline" is not meant as a club to hit some disagreeable person over the head, but as a measure designed by Jesus' yearning love for the lost. And so Peter interrupts with a question. Jesus, as a good teacher, welcomes it. Though it may betray imperfect understanding of His Word, it shows desire to learn. V. 21. What disturbs Peter: There must be a limit to forgiveness. Too much of it encourages hypocrisy. If repentance is too often repeated, must not sincerity be doubted? Is not seven times the extreme limit, very generous? Peter may have known that the rabbis said three times enough. And Peter here refers especially to personal insults. How much slower we are to forgive them, truly, with all our heart! More ready to pronounce God's forgiveness. When personally injured, what elaborate apology and redress we require! "Forgive, but not forget." Or: "God may forgive, but I can't." And when the offense is often repeated, what shall we do? V. 22. Jesus says: No limit. Wherever repentance, forgive. Consider how difficult your own struggle against sin. Are you not a penitent sinner? Do you not know your failings? Have you not experienced bitter struggle against the deceitfulness of human heart, persistence of temper, meanness, jealousy, greed, untruthfulness, uncleanness? How often has not God forgiven you! If

He had set any limit, what hope for you? O you Christian, in humble love forgive! Remember Fifth Petition of Lord's Prayer. (Vv. 23—35, briefly, if desired.)

Thus Jesus has to-day taught us the duty of humble love toward the sinning brother. Let us seek to win him to repentance. And let us be ever ready to forgive, also every personal injury. God help us! Amen.

H. M. ZORN.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

John 7, 14—24.

There is much unbelief in the world. Darkness still covers the earth and gross darkness the people, Is. 60, 2 b. "Infidelity has been creeping into the Church, into the pulpits, into our systems of education, into the very heart of society. Multitudes do not know any more what they believe and are not anxious to know what they should believe, and multitudes more make a merit of not believing anything."

There is, however, also much anxious uncertainty in spiritual things among serious-minded people. Ever and anon in private conversation the question is: "What must I do to be saved?" In view of the great confusion among churches, some one eagerly asks: "Which Church is right? Where can I find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

Even a disciple of Jesus must sometimes cry out: "I believe, Lord; help Thou mine unbelief." Life, with its disappointments and bereavements, its losses and its crosses, tosses him about with many a conflict, many a doubt. Then, too, the bold assertions of learned scientists, popular authors, and prominent radio preachers contradicting the Scriptures and denying the faith of the fathers greatly disturb him at times.

We therefore welcome the text for this morning. It gives us our Lord's advice on

Hindrances to a Happy Certainty in Spiritual Things.

These hindrances are: —

1. Reliance on human authority; *2. Wilful refusal to believe;*
3. Desire for one's own glory.

1.

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, v. 14. For nearly three years he had there and elsewhere testified concerning Himself, confirming the Word with signs following. The people confessed that He spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes, Matt. 7, 29. They confidently exclaimed: "This is of a truth that Prophet which should come into the world," John 6, 14. Even His enemies had to admit, "Never a man spake as this man." Still, many knew not what to make of Him. Some declared Him "a good man," v. 12. Comment on such opinion. Cp. Matt. 16, 13—16. True Christianity calls for faith in the deity of Christ.

Mohammedans even look on Him as a good man, a great prophet. Others in Jerusalem put Him down as a deceiver of the people, v. 12. This was bold slander, daring blasphemy, a crying injustice to Him who had gone about doing good.

What was the trouble? Why were the Jews not agreed on Jesus Christ? Why did so many not believe on Him? What hindered a happy certainty in spiritual things on their part? We read, v. 15. So they put no confidence in Him and His preaching just because He had not gotten His wisdom from some learned rabbi or scribe, who had his own way of explaining the Old Testament Scriptures. Explain.

Nowadays it has come to this, that preachers with a university degree or two after their names make the profoundest impression. The mere fact that they are highly educated in human sciences guarantees them the confidence of the public. Others who cannot exhibit as much learning as they must suffer their authority to be questioned.

Note what Jesus answered the people who doubted and disbelieved His claims, in v. 16. For His prophetic work He had received the anointing of the Holy Ghost, Acts 10, 38. God the Father Himself confirmed His preaching, Matt. 17, 5.

Do you want certainty in spiritual things? Then you must not rely on human authority in religious matters. Bear in mind that all men, even the wisest and best, are ignorant in godly things by nature. No man hath seen God at any time, John 1, 18; 1 Cor. 2, 9. *No man* can approach unto the light in which God dwells, 1 Tim. 6, 16. The wisest of scientists are at a loss to tell who God really is and what He requires of us. Every new generation of skeptics has toiled to solve the problem, and each school has put forth some new guess at the meaning of these riddles, but none has ever been able to satisfy the other. Moreover, the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness unto man, 1 Cor. 2, 14. Yea, men following their own speculation in spiritual matters are bound to go far astray. They become blind leaders of the blind, with the result that both fall into the ditch, Matt. 15, 14.

Do you want a happy certainty in spiritual things? Go to God Himself, its very Source and Fountainhead. He has spoken by the prophets, Heb. 1, 1; by Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, Heb. 1, 2; Matt. 17, 5; text, v. 16; by the apostles sent by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Ghost, Luke 10, 16; John 16, 13; 1 Cor. 2, 13. It is only by accepting Christ's "Verily, verily, I say unto you" and the prophets' "Thus saith the Lord" and the apostles' "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" that you can and will obtain a happy certainty in the things pertaining to your peace with God. A Christian, be he preacher or layman, may not be what is called a philosopher, scientist, biologist, geologist, chemist, or historian. But if he is schooled of God Himself in the wisdom of God's own holy Book, the Bible, he has an understanding of God, of Jesus Christ, of himself, and of the way to life eternal which is more certain and satisfying than all the wisdom of the ages which puts out God and these written revelations here of His will.

2.

The first hindrance to a happy certainty in spiritual things is, according to the text, reliance on human authority. The second is a wilful refusal to believe.

Jesus felt that His claim to authority from God the Father would carry little or no weight with the people who were disputing with Him in the Temple at the time. He therefore invited them to a fair test of His doctrine. He said: v. 17.

Our Lord had many occasions to complain about the obstinacy of the Jews. Compare John 5, 31 ff.; 6, 41 ff.; 8, 37 ff. Many, many times they wondered at His gracious words and marveled at His mighty works. They heard Him gladly. They followed Him to see the signs which He wrought on the sick. They heard how He put their leaders to silence when they tried to entangle Him in His speech. Yet few believed. The only explanation that He could offer for their unbelief was that which He so mournfully expressed when He beheld Jerusalem, wept over it, and said: "Ye would not."

Many are not Christians because they do not want to be Christians. Proofs there are in abundance that the Bible is inspired of God, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Christianity is the only true and genuine religion. Fulfilled prophecies. Miracles attested by reliable witnesses. The history of missions. The sanctifying power of faith in Jesus Christ. The wholesome influence of Christianity on nations which have at least partially been brought under the influence of its transforming powers. The utter failure of all satanic efforts to root out the Church either by brutal force or cunning deception. Still, many will not believe.

Is not this, in a manner, the difficulty of Christians, too? It is because of our perverted will and our inborn enmity to God that we sometimes painfully lack that happy certainty in spiritual things which we ought to have. The same power of which Paul complained that it was at war within him against the spirit and prevented him from always doing the right, keeps us also from being as much assured of the truth of our religion, the goodness of God, and the grace of Jesus Christ as we ought to be.

Hear, then, the Savior's advice: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Accordingly, He urged His hearers to submit themselves to God's will by believing His Word, trusting in the Savior whom He had sent, obeying His commandments. Thus they would experience for themselves and in themselves the enlightening, comforting, sanctifying power of the truth proceeding from His very lips. In spiritual things also experience is the best teacher.

This is so in other things. To be absolutely certain of the healing powers of medicine recommended by an expert doctor, you must take it and let it do its work for you. To be absolutely certain that a particular dish is very delicious and wholesome, you must eat it. To be absolutely certain that "music hath charms," you must hear it. To be absolutely certain that nature is beautiful, you must go out and see it.

After all, it was only when Paul could say: *"I know* whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," that he had a happy certainty in matters of the Christian faith. Compare David, Ps. 119, 22; the apostles, John 6, 68, 69; Christians in general, Heb. 6, 4. 5.

Of course, the good thing of a heart that is established by faith, sure and steadfast in its convictions and in its hope, is the work of God's grace, Heb. 13, 9. Cp. Luther's explanation of the Third Article.

Appeal to personal testimony in confirmation of v. 17.

3.

Yet a third hindrance to a happy certainty in spiritual things, besides reliance on human authority and a wilful refusal to believe, is the desire for one's own glory.

This was the sin of the Jews as a nation. They boasted the Law of Moses, yet they interpreted the Law to suit their own fancies, v. 23, circumcising on the Sabbath Day, yet being angry at Christ, because He had healed a man on that day. They thought themselves exceedingly righteous. Yet all the while they went about trying to kill Jesus Christ in open violation of the Fifth Commandment, v. 19. Pride in their own religious ideas, haughty resentment at being corrected by the humble Prophet of Nazareth kept them from putting themselves on terms of acceptance with God and Christ.

Jesus, on the contrary, had but this one unselfish desire, namely, to do the will of His Father. He sought the glory of Him that had sent Him, v. 18. Hence there was no unrighteousness, no hypocrisy and deceit, but truthfulness and fidelity only in Him.

To gain a happy certainty in spiritual things, let us see to it that our preaching is not the product of our minds nor made to satisfy itching ears; that our believing is not made to suit our own ideas, likes, and fancies; that our conduct is not fashioned to please ourselves. Let us rather unselfishly, humbly, in these essentials seek only the glory of God. If we adhere strictly to the Word of God, regardless of our own notions, ours shall be the satisfaction of building on a rock, Matt. 7, 24—29. If we keep Christ's commandments, neither adding anything to them nor taking anything from them, we shall have the happy assurance that we are truly dedicated to Him in a loving, active faith and as a hearty love for Him requires, John 14, 23; John 2, 3—5; 4, 21.

In conclusion, then, we pray God that by grace, for Jesus' sake, through His Holy Spirit, He would teach us not to rely on human authority, but wholly on His Word; that He would break every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow His name, nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of our own flesh, and grant us the experience of His truth and goodness; that He would keep us from seeking our own glory, but instead train us to consecrate ourselves wholly to all His good pleasure. Then shall ours be a happy certainty in spiritual things. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it."

R. Goetz.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 12, 38—44.

The old saying, "Not all that glitters is gold." Exemplify. Much religion and churchliness in the world, but not all is genuine. By way of contrast, the text before us speaks on —

Religion Pure and Undefiled.

Religion pure and undefiled is —

1. Not hypocrisy, but sincerity; 2. Not pride, but humility;
3. Not greed, but generosity.

1.

A) Familiar ring of the text. Scribes and Pharisees our Lord's chief enemies. Refer to their high standing and influence. Be elaborate on their persistent, cunning, and ruthless methods in opposing Jesus. They were determined against Him, according to the Bible record of His dispute with them in His last week, Matt. 21, 12—22, 46. Jesus felt constrained to sound a last, comprehensive, and emphatic warning against them, Matt. 23. His chief objection to them was their hypocrisy. Mention particulars according to Matt. 23. Even prayer they profaned and disgraced, text, v. 40. Spirit of true prayer is that of fear, love, and trust in God above all things and that of right-minded concern for our own well-being as well as tender interest in the welfare of others. Scribes and Pharisees prayed long and often, but their motive in so doing was selfish. Not adoration of God, not anxiety for the good of others, but private and material gain dominated and actuated them. Their prayers a pretense. This aroused the indignation of Jesus.

Hypocrisy and pretense extremely loathsome to God, Ps. 5, 6. He hates them; He condemns them; He solemnly cautions against them. Why? The hypocrite not only has no religion, but abuses religion. He challenges the all-knowing God with his make-believe, Acts 5, 3. He dastardly deceives and violates the trust of fellow-men. Judas. He causes the heathen to blaspheme, Rom. 2, 23—24. Guard against hypocrisy. It is a crime against God, a serious hindrance to the Church, a great offense to the world. The common objection and accusation, "There are too many hypocrites in the Church." Not always justified, yet true in some instances. Beware of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees!

B) Imitate the sincerity of the poor widow. Content to be practically unknown, notwithstanding her hard lot in life, she was wholeheartedly dedicated to the Lord. Quietly, unassumingly, she worships in the Temple. Though under necessity to deny herself comforts and conveniences, yea, though left with barely enough to live, v. 42, she yet puts the glory of God and the welfare of her neighbor above all else and brings her modest offering to the Temple treasury. Surely she was sincere in her devotion. Other examples: 2 Kings 5, 3; Rom. 16, 2; 2 Tim. 1, 16—18.

Sincerity is a God-pleasing virtue. "The Lord looketh on the heart," 1 Sam. 16, 7; Prov. 23, 26; Jer. 29, 13. 14. The faithful have always practised sincerity and prayed for a full measure of it, Ps. 129, 23. Without sincerity we cannot have part in the gracious gifts of God, Acts 8, 21. Exhort to sincerity, according to Heb. 10, 22 ("true heart"); 2 Cor. 6, 8 ("deceivers, yet true"). This is religion pure and undefiled.

2.

Such religion pure and undefiled will also banish all pride from us.

A) Christ's "Beware of the scribes!" was also directed against their desire for vainglory. They loved to go in long clothing to show themselves as princes, judges, and gentlemen of the long robe. Their going in such clothing was not sinful, but their loving to go in it, priding themselves in it, exalting themselves on account of it, demanding respect by it, saying to their long clothes, as Saul to Samuel, "Honor me now before this people," this was a product of pride. They loved salutations in the market-places, the chief seats in the synagogs, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, vv. 38. 39. Thus they aimed to advance themselves, coveted applause, and were fond of it.

Pride is an offense to God, Prov. 16, 5. It is at war with religion pure and undefiled, because it ignores sinfulness, prevents repentance, bars faith, hinders prayer, and makes true charity, without which a man is nothing, impossible, 1 Cor. 13. Compare scribes and Pharisees on these points. Pride invokes the punishment of God, Is. 13, 11;

Jer. 50, 31—32; Luke 1, 51—52. Compare Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4, 28—33; Herod, Acts 12, 21—23.

Application. — Pride among church-members on account of wealth, superior learning, higher social standing, etc.

B) Not pride, but humility, is religion pure and undefiled before God. Compare widow of the text. Quietly and unassumingly she makes her way into the Temple, worships there to satisfy the longings of her humble heart; with no desire to be seen and praised of men, she brings her offering and passes out to go about her daily tasks. Such are a delight unto the Lord, Is. 66, 2; Ps. 34, 19. They shall have their reward, Ps. 29, 23; Luke 1, 52 b (Mary); Luke 18, 14 (publican); Matt. 8, 8 ff. (centurion of Capernaum); Acts 10 (Cornelius).

Reasons for humility: Man's mortal estate, Gen. 18, 27; Ps. 8, 4; his sinfulness, Ps. 51, 7; Is. 64, 6; his utter dependence upon the goodness, mercy, and grace of God. Cp. Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed.

Exhort to, encourage, humility, Phil. 2, 5 ff.

3.

Lastly, religion pure and undefiled before God is not greed, but generosity.

A) Beware of the scribes, said Jesus also because they had an insatiable desire to enrich themselves, regardless of the needs of others. Greed shows no sympathy; otherwise the scribes would not have preyed on widows in their bereavement, v. 40. Greed shuns loving toil, otherwise the scribes would have rendered other and better service than mere lip-service and hypocritical prayers, v. 40.

Guard against greed. It is a sin against God, Micah 2, 1—2. It is a sin against the neighbor, Is. 5, 8. It is a sin against yourself, 1 Tim. 6, 6—10.

Is greed the reason why some do not pay their church dues? Let them take to heart Matt. 6, 24; Eph. 5, 5 ("covetous man"). Be not deceived. Greed wars against the soul. It makes Christianity impossible. It bars from heaven.

B) Christ warns against greed, but He demands generosity. The widow, also referred to in the text, distinguished herself by it. Despite her great poverty and widowhood she brings an offering to the Temple treasury. Without regard for self, she is whole-heartedly dedicated to God. Prov. 3, 9. She appreciates God's blessings received from worship in a practical manner. Ps. 116, 12—14. She is generous indeed, vv. 43. 44.

Let us imitate her example. Jesus exhorts us to do so, v. 43. His eye is upon us to see how we respond, v. 41. May His hearty commendation of the widow's generosity encourage us. Cp. the promises Prov. 19, 17; Eccl. 11, 1; Luke 6, 38; Matt. 10, 42; Luke 16, 9; Matt. 25, 21—23; 2 Cor. 9, 6 a; Gal. 6, 9. Exhort according to 2 Cor. 8, 7. 9. 12. 24.

May God for Jesus' sake through His Holy Spirit keep us from hypocrisy and grant us sincerity, banish all pride from our hearts, and plant humility there instead, help us to root out all greed and cultivate generosity in place of it. Then will ours be a religion pure and undefiled.

R. Goetz.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 21, 33—46.

Vineyards, according to geographers and eye-witnesses, are plentiful in the Holy Land and in Oriental countries in general. This we gather also from the Bible, since many of its stories are connected with the plant or its fruit: the story of Noah's sin, Gen. 9, 20. 21; again, the story of the spies, among whom were Joshua and Caleb, Num. 13, 23; furthermore, the story of Naboth and King Ahab, 1 Kings 21. These illustrate the importance of the vine in Palestine as well as the fact that it is found there in great abundance. This importance is further borne out by the frequent similes referring to the vine and the vineyard in the Scriptures; *e. g.*, Ps. 128, 3; Is. 5, 1; 16, 8—10; Jer. 48, 32.

The Bible uses the vine and the vineyard as a representation of the Church, God's people, collectively and individually. This picture we find in the Old and New Testaments. Consider such passages as Is. 5, 1; Song of Sol. 1, 6; John 15, 1—6; Joel 1, 7; and many others. Since this picture was so common and since it contains so many parallels, it was very usable and effective. So Christ speaks also in our text.

The Parable of the Vineyard.

1. The excellencies of the vineyard.

These are described in our text, v. 33: "There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard and hedged it round about and digged a wine-press in it and built a tower and let it out to husbandmen." The owner does everything that is necessary to perfect his vineyard and to increase the expectancy of returns. There was the full equipment which a good vineyard should have, and proper protection against foxes and thieves had been provided. Cf. Song of Sol. 2, 15.

The different features here mentioned have been explained as representing the Jewish nation and various advantages which they enjoyed by God's grace. Surely, if we refer this to the Jews of the Old Testament, the picture is true, because God blessed them above others and protected them wonderfully. Reference may be made here to several examples from the history of Israel.

We think rather of the Church of the New Covenant and its excellencies. Here is a vineyard, too, planted and prepared by God, by our Savior. Our Savior purchased His vineyard and planted it, and He nourishes, cleanses, and protects it, 1 Pet. 2, 9; Eph. 5, 25—27; Is. 5, 1—7; Jer. 2, 21; Ps. 80, 9—11; John 15, 1.

The Lord has done everything for His vineyard that can be done for it, and now He hands it over to husbandmen to tend it for Him. He has the right to expect some profit and results at the proper time. The keepers are not owners, but only husbandmen. They owe an accounting to their master.

These husbandmen represented the leaders of the Jews, and in our day they represent the leaders of the Church. They are responsible to the Lord for their leadership and conditions in the Church, 1 Pet. 5, 2—4; Acts 20, 28; Ezek. 3, 17.

What wonderful possibilities we see here in this vineyard! We sing: "Glorious things of thee are spoken," etc. (Hymn 464, 1.) However, what do we find instead?

2. The abuses practised in the vineyard.

The Savior proceeds to picture the horrid abuses in our text, vv. 35—39. He tells us that the owner of the vineyard sent servants at the right time to bring in the portion of the fruits due him, but that they were mistreated. He sent others, who, in his opinion, had more authority and whose word would bear more weight; but the husbandmen treated these the same way, beating and even killing them. Then the owner decided to send his only son, hoping the husbandmen would at least respect him as the personal representative of the master. But, alas! they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. Such shameful actions were unheard of.

With these words, Jesus would picture to us the abuses in the Church of the Old Testament and their rejection of the Lord. The Lord sent His prophets again and again, important men and less important ones, great heroes of the faith and more timid men; but they mistreated them all and rejected their message. The fruits of repentance and faith which the Lord has a right to expect were not forthcoming. Cf. 2 Chron. 24, 20; Jer. 3, 20; Heb. 11, 36; Acts 7, 52. A sad picture indeed!

After these prophets, who were only shadows of One to come, God sent His only-begotten Son. Mark describes this son, chap. 12, 6: "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved." Jesus is set off from all the other prophets, as being far greater and more precious. Of Him the others wrote and spoke; Him they surely ought to resepect. However, the husbandmen had no respect for His person; yea, they hated Him more than the rest that had been sent, considering Him the heir. Therefore they cast Him out and slew Him.

In the story of Christ's Passion we find the leaders of the Jews, the teachers, to be His worst enemies, who stirred up the people to call for His death. The death took place out of the city, on Calvary. It was the same race and nation that had stoned the prophets. Cf. v. 46.

What is the condition in the Church of to-day? Do the husbandmen accept the Son? Consider the Modernists and their vain babbling. The prophets are stoned, *i. e.,* the books of the Bible, are cast aside as unreliable; the Lord Jesus, the Son and Heir, is stoned and cast out. They deny the fundamental truths regarding Christ. Consider higher critics of the Bible; consider current radio sermons; consider countries like Russia.

How sad these abuses in a perfectly good vineyard!

3. The reckoning.

Such conditions as described in the foregoing verses cannot go on forever, Gal. 6, 7. Hence the Lord describes a time of reckoning with these ungodly husbandmen.

The owner of the vineyard did not expect too much when he sent for some fruits; for we expressly read in v. 34: "And when the time of the fruit drew near," καιρὸς τῶν καρπῶν. This, then, was the proper time when the owner could rightly expect fruit. Mark says: "at the season." Therefore, when Jesus told this parable, He turned to His hearers and asked them for their verdict (v. 40), and the Jews said to Him (v. 41): "He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." They pronounced their own sentence in these words. Cf. v. 43.

The vineyard has been taken away repeatedly and given to others. Luther points out that the Word of God travels from one nation to another. Church history bears him out in this point. The vineyard has moved from Asia Minor and Africa westward and still farther westward.

Rejection of the Son of God means rejection of the only way to eternal life; it means eternal destruction to men. This Jesus brings out in v. 44 of our text. The Scriptures declare it in many places: Is. 28, 16; Acts 4, 7—11; Is. 60, 12; Dan. 2, 34; 1 Pet. 2, 7. 8; John 3, 36. The word about the falling upon the stone and being crushed is missing in Mark, but Luke, again, has it.

The comforting part of this sad story we may find in v. 42, where the Lord speaks of the Stone which has become the Head of the corner, *i. e.,* the Corner-stone, the true Foundation of our salvation. The word here quoted is Ps. 118, 22.

Jesus will unite all who believe in Him and support them. This is our comfort, too, Eph. 2, 20—22; John 17, 3; Heb. 2, 14. 15.

May God preserve us from rejection of His Son! On the contrary, let us build on Him in faith as the true Head of the corner of our salvation.

OTTOMAR KRUEGER.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 2, 13—17.

"Jesus sinners doth receive."
O may all this saying ponder, etc.
(Hymn 414, 1.)

Jesus was a popular Preacher, who attracted great crowds wherever He went, as we read in the first verse of our text: "And all the multitude resorted unto Him." When He wanted to preach at the seaside, they pressed upon Him so that He had to step into a fisherman's boat; when He healed the paralytic, the press was so great that the four men uncovered the roof to let the sick man down; when He went into the wilderness, He fed five thousand and at another time four thousand men. It must have delighted the hearts of the disciples to see the people come to their Master.

True, other leaders and preachers have gathered still greater crowds or have preached to more people at one time; however, they were not on that account the equals of Christ. Jesus was different. He could not only call masses to Himself, but He was also able to help them, whether they were physically ailing or whether they needed rest for their souls. He was the real Physician, He was the Savior of men. He taught as one having authority, the authority of the Son of God. He had a mission and a message, Matt. 28, 18; 18, 11; 1 John 3, 8. Think of His dealings with the woman at Jacob's Well, John 4, or with the man at Bethesda, John 5.

There is one blessed truth that stands out in all of Christ's work and dealings, and that is brought out in our text, too; it is this, that Jesus is the Friend of sinners; He really came to save that which was lost. Let us consider: —

Jesus the Friend of All Sinners.

1. He calls one of them to be His disciple.

This story of the calling of Levi is recorded by three evangelists, by Mark, Matthew (chap. 9), and Luke (chap. 5). As an occurrence in Christ's public ministry it must have shocked the self-righteous enemies of Jesus terribly.

Disciples are pupils, or scholars. We know how the Savior called His first followers at the Sea of Galilee. He found Simon and Andrew, James and John, there and called them to come and follow Him, promising to make them fishers of men. They forsook all and followed Him. They were unlearned, uncultured men at the time. They had an honorable occupation, though, that of fishing.

In our text, however, the case is different. Jesus passes a man who is sitting at the receipt of custom, a publican, Levi by name, and He calls him to be a disciple. Now, publicans were despised because of their corrupt practises in collecting taxes from the Jews, and as we learn from the story of Zacchaeus, the Jews had reason to fear them. The publicans were mentioned in the same breath with sinners, *i. e.,* with the outcasts of society, with thieves and harlots. Such a person Jesus calls to be His disciple.

Men try to select people of influence and honor when they start a movement, but Jesus chooses sinners. Men are clannish, Jesus is not. He calls Levi, and Levi forsakes all and follows Him. He became a true disciple, later called Matthew, the writer of our first gospel. We are told that he labored fifteen years at Jerusalem and afterwards among the Ethiopians, Medes, and Persians.

To-day Jesus also walks through the country, calling disciples and followers. He does so through the Gospel. Some, by the grace of God, answer this call and become faithful followers; others ignore it entirely. Not many are willing to leave all and follow Jesus, as did Levi.

How do we compare with Levi? Are we following Christ? Are we living the life of a disciple? Are we putting our faith into action? Do we love Jesus as much as did Levi, to the extent of leaving all for Him? Jesus called Levi, and He calls us.

2. He sits at meat with other sinners.

We are told in v. 15 that Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house and that many publicans and sinners sat with Him and His disciples. Cf. text.

The question has arisen as to whose house it was where Jesus sat. Does ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ refer to a house which Jesus probably owned, or was it the house of Levi? Matthew simply says "in the house." Luke gives us a plainer statement, saying that Levi made Jesus a feast in his own house; so evidently the house was Levi's. Cf. Matt. 8, 20.

At Levi's table a crowd gathered. The invited ones were acquaintances of Levi, men of his own walk of life and who had lived the same kind of life as he. They were his friends and associates in the business of toll-gathering. "Many publicans and sinners" were there. It was a table at which the Jewish leaders would not dare sit for fear of defilement.

Jesus, however, sat down with these "publicans and sinners." He lowered Himself in order to raise others. No one was too lowly and despised for Him. This was in keeping with His state of humiliation, or inanition, in which He was made in the likeness of men and made Himself of no reputation and was found in the fashion of men, Phil. 2, 5—8.

If we ask what kind of sinners were acceptable to Jesus, we find the answer in such stories as that of Zacchaeus, who shows himself truly penitent, or the publican in the Temple. The Scriptures teach us: Ps. 51, 17; 32, 5; Is. 42, 3; John 6, 37. Penitent, believing sinners are acceptable with God.

How thankful we ought to be that Jesus accepts sinners and not only people of wealth and such as occupy a high station in life. How many of us would hope to be saved if Jesus had not humbled Himself by associating with publicans and sinners? — The Gospel appeals especially to the lower classes of men.

3. He justifies His actions.

Text, v. 16. When the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eat with publicans and sinners, they said to His disciples: "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" They were, or at least pretended to be, offended by the action of Jesus, as we repeatedly read in the gospels. The woman, *e. g.,* of whom we read Luke 7, 37 ff. had just washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, when the self-righteous Pharisees objected, saying: "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner." Cf. also Luke 15, 1. 2. So it has always been; for that reason St. Paul tells his readers: 1 Cor. 1, 26—29.

Now, what did Jesus say? Did He assent to what His cavilers said? Not for a moment. He yielded not an inch, even as Paul did not when he faced false doctrine; even as Luther did not in 1529 at Marburg; even as our fathers did not in 1530 at Augsburg. There was no compromise. On the contrary, Jesus pointed out the wrong attitude of His critics. Text, v. 17. He said: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." This passage, at first reading, seems to offer a difficulty; however, to the student of Scriptures, to the Bible Christian, there is no difficulty.

There are no people in this world who are "whole," *i. e.,* without sin, or entirely righteous of themselves, Ps. 14, 3; Eccl. 7, 20; Job 14, 4. However, there are such as imagine that they are better than others, yea, without sin, entirely healthy in a spiritual sense. These the Lord means here.

What a pity to think that one is well when one is seriously ill! Disaster follows. Self-righteousness is just as destructive to the soul. For those who persist in self-righteousness Jesus came in vain with the great riches of His blessings; for them the Gospel has no comfort. Such were the scribes and Pharisees of our text. Cf. John 9, 39—41.

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. This, then, is our chance and our comfort. We are sinners. Jesus calls us through His Word. The call is efficacious. His name indicates that He will save us, Matt. 1, 21. Though we still sin after He has accepted us as His own and made us righteous before God, we know that He daily and richly forgives our sins and is our Advocate with the Father, 1 John 2, 1. 2.

Let us therefore rejoice in the fact that Jesus is the Friend of sinners, as we have seen from this text. Let us come to Him, answering the call of the Gospel. (Hymn 318, 4. 5.) OTTOMAR KRUEGER.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 9, 27—34.

Introduction. — We are living in a mechanical and intensely practical age. Physical problems of life receive almost exclusive emphasis. Heartless mechanistic philosophy of our day leaves little room for the spiritual values and problems of life. Even modernistic religion is concerned primarily with physical questions. Jesus is recognized merely as a prophet and leader in the affairs of this life. He is lauded and held up for emulation in His sympathy with the physical sufferers, His interest in the lonely and the outcasts, His denunciation of wrong and injustice, His qualities of patience, kindliness, unselfishness, and righteousness. Of His atoning work, His spiritual kingdom, and His constant demands for faith in His atoning merits we hear little or nothing.

But the Christ as the Bible reveals Him places our spiritual problems first. Above all things we are to seek first the kingdom of God. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?" The great issue of life is not our physical well-being, but the question as to whether or not we have found, and are traveling, the one divinely designed way to eternal life. That is the great issue to-day for you and for me and for every child of man. Faith in the redemptive merits of our crucified Savior is life's one necessary attainment. In order to emphasize this again, let us consider to-day, at the hand of our text's story of the healing of the two blind men:

Life's Great Question: "Believe Ye?"

Let us view it in the light of

1. *The supreme importance of faith;*
2. *Christ's methods in the working and maintenance of faith.*

1.

Christ's emphasis of faith.

A) In His general ministry. Always required faith. Why? Because He healed diseases for the sake of healing souls. Creating faith was healing the soul-sickness. Christ never performed miracles for purposes of display and the enhancement of his personal fame. There is not a purposeless miracle in the Bible. Christ always had a spiritual object. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. His great mission primarily spiritual in character.

a) He repudiates mere recognition of His power over physical conditions. His stern rebuke of those who sought to make Him king after the feeding of the five thousand. His refusal of the Jews' demand for a sign.

b) His varying treatment of the subjects of his miracles. Had no stereotyped method. We read of no general mass healings. Jesus always individualizes. He heals "one by one," sometimes in this way, sometimes in that. Every sufferer to Him a separate soul, a distinctive entity which demanded distinctive attention in order that the object of faith might be accomplished. Recognized in each individual an immortal soul which needed, above all else, the saving gift of faith in Him. No matter how much He sympathized with the physical needs of the sufferer, the healing of the sufferer's soul was uppermost in His mind.

B) In the story. It had been a wonderful day, crowded with mighty deeds. Lord was returning from home of Jairus. Followed by two blind men, importuning Him for help. "Have mercy on us." Cried again and again. It seemed as though Christ heeded not. Passed on in silence, absorbed, it seemed, in holy meditation. They follow Him into the house and continue their pleas. Finally He turns toward them with the question, "Believe ye," etc. When they answer: "Yea, Lord," He touches their eyes and says: "According to your faith be it unto you." Double reference to the need of faith. A forceful direction of their attention from their physical ailments to their much-more-serious spiritual troubles.

a) What final, lasting good would have been accomplished if these men had been physically restored while their souls remained unhealed? Their newly found physical sense would probably have opened up wider and more diversified fields of sinning, and an additional means of heaping guilt upon their souls would have been the result. And so Jesus is solicitous that their newly found power of sight be directed by a living faith and become a consecrated means of serving God. He wants to establish that these men have come to Him not in the spirit of half-hearted speculation, in the manner of people who will try every recommended doctor or remedy in order to get rid of some physical ailment. His healing miracle is to be of lasting spiritual benefit to them.

b) The two men confess their faith. It is not speculative and uncertain. They call Him "Lord." They address Him as the "Son of David," indicating that they regarded Him as the Messiah, the spiritual Redeemer, the God-sent Deliverer. They had evidently heard not only of His power, but also of His claims, His mission. Thus they had gained the prime requisite of life and happiness, the one supreme object of life.

c) In our own life. Our own life has really only one important issue, and that is that we may have the saving faith in Christ Jesus. All other concerns relatively unimportant. The one thing needful. We are apt to have a warped sense of values, to place undue emphasis on the value of temporal possessions. God gives life only with one purpose. He desires it to have its issue in the eternal life of heaven.

Unless it is a life of faith in Christ, it is mislived. Faith alone gives it a purpose. Faith alone guarantees its blessed end. Faith alone solves its fundamental problem. Faith alone opens the gates of heaven. God's one great object with us is that we attain faith and remain in faith. For this He yearns, pleads with us, and fashions the various experiences of our life.

For the attainment of this end He often adopts striking and to us unwelcome methods. Let us consider some of these methods.

2.

A) God's use of physical affliction.

a) Physical ills are, of course, the consequences of sin. Through sin the whole world was turned into a vast abode of suffering. No one immune. We are born with the germ of death. Physical ills without number.

b) In the adaptability of divine grace these physical ills are often utilized to attain God's great object of faith. There is a close relationship between God's providence regarding our physical affairs and temporal well-being and our spiritual health and life. Full, unimpaired possession and use of all physical powers is sometimes a spiritual handicap and detriment. And so God afflicts us with temporary or even permanent impairment, denies us certain things that we sorely want. All with the gracious purpose to lead us to, and exercise us in, faith. In many cases unbroken physical health and prosperity would lead us to spiritual ruin.

aa) Affliction impresses us with uncertain, temporary character of temporal things.

bb) Affliction often prepares the ground for the seed of the Word of God. Two men in text might never have found Jesus if they had not been blind. Would probably have been part of the careless, superficial multitude. Their trouble caused them to become interested in a helper and to listen to the word of Jesus. They began to take heed. Their blindness shut them out from many of the activities of their fellows, gave them more time and incentive for thought and introspection. Then the message of Jesus brought the conviction of the Messiahship of this Jesus. Faith dawned and finally brought them to Jesus with their humble, but persistent plea for mercy. Thus their great misfortune became through God's mercy a great blessing.

cc) We wish to emphasize that these men came to faith by *hearing*. They could not witness the works of Christ. They received the Gospel through testimony. Cp. Rom. 10, 14—17.

dd) To-day many a person becomes attentive to God's Word by affliction. His trouble prompts him to seek help, but human agencies cannot give it. What thoughtless, superficial, world-loving creatures we would be if all our carnal hopes and wishes would be fulfilled!

Under the burden of misery we often start to listen again to God. In days of bitterness we find sweetness in His Word. (Quote Scriptural examples of how God utilized affliction for the purpose of attracting man's attention to Him and of establishing or reestablishing faith. Heb. 12, 6; Is. 26, 16.)

B) God's purpose in delaying help.

a) Christ's attitude toward two blind men. They followed Him with persistent pleading. He apparently paid no heed. Seemed preoccupied. They did not desist. Finally followed Him into the house and there continued their prayer for help. Finally He notices them. Even then he does not help at once, but asks them the question concerning their faith. After their avowal of their belief in Him, He again makes their cure contingent upon their faith. Then He finally heals them.

b) What was His object? The delay of His help was prompted by a purely benevolent purpose. They were still apparently overstressing in their hearts their physical ills and the Savior's powers of physical healing. By delay Jesus exercises their faith. By His questions He draws their attention to their spiritual needs and to Himself as the Savior from sin. If He had healed them at once at their first request without further steps, their budding faith might have died in the novelty of the new physical sensations opened up to them. Jesus was not going to open their eyes in order to grant them greater and more numerous opportunities for self-indulgence and the service of the world. He wants their new powers placed at His disposal, wants them placed in the service of faith. And so He first instructs them and exercises their faith and then heals them.

c) God has a benevolent purpose in delaying His help to-day. We cry to God for help in time of need, and our prayers go apparently unheeded. Perhaps we are still too much impressed with the physical aspects of our trouble. Perhaps He is utilizing our affliction for some special spiritual purpose. Our faith needs the exercise afforded by tribulation. Many prayers for temporal and physical gifts, *e. g.*, for the restoration of health, the rehabilitation of bodily faculties, remain apparently unanswered, because God knows that they would be used in intensified self-service and greater perversion of our spiritual life and power.

C) But God always hears.

His love makes Him unfailingly attentive to our needs. He feels pity and sympathy for the sufferer. His afflicting and chastening hand is moved by most benevolent motives. He hears the plea of His children always and answers them by giving them a greater measure of spiritual gifts, a more abundant supply of humble and confident faith in the crucified Redeemer. In the end the believing sufferer is always the gainer.

Some day we are going to realize the marvelous and gracious connection between our troubles and God's love. That connection is there. We are His children, saved by His redeeming love. Not subject to the pranks of fate. Not victims of chance. Our life is planned and designed by a loving God, Ps. 37, 23. He wants us in heaven. Let us submit to His leadership and let us be supremely solicitous regarding the maintenance of our faith in Christ, which is the key to heaven's gates. Let us use His Word faithfully, so that through the Spirit's power we may answer affirmatively the all-important question: "Believe ye?" PAUL LINDEMANN.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

John 7, 25—31.

Introduction. — There are important questions on which there may be decided differences of opinion without affecting the honesty, respectability, or prosperity of the dissenting parties. There are questions which are of importance in one part of the world, but have no weight in other parts. There are questions with which we may refuse to concern ourselves without thereby jeopardizing our standing among men.

But there is one question which is of universal importance and which demands an answer from every human being on the face of the earth. This question affects all peoples and all ages. The answer to this question involves the eternal destiny of each individual. It is a question which agitated the minds of the people in our text. The question has not been outlived and has lost none of its timeliness. It is the everlastingly important question regarding the identity of Jesus Christ. Since this question is of such a determinative character also for us, let us learn from our text the right answer to the question: —

"Who Is Jesus Christ?"

Let us examine —

1. *What men have said and say of Him;*
2. *What He says of Himself.*

1.

A) Identity of Jesus Christ was a burning issue in His day. Miracles of Jesus alone made Him naturally a topic of general discussion. This miracle-working prophet could not fail to attract general attention. His fame had spread throughout the Jewish land. Opinions regarding His personality differed greatly. His startling addresses and unexpected claims intensified discussion. Who was He? What was His mission?

B) Position of the leaders.

a) In one of the verses preceding our text, Jesus had made reference to the fact that leaders had determined His death. This official determination to put Him out of the way is mentioned also in conversation of people of Jerusalem, recorded in our text. Jesus of Nazareth had been such an important issue that Jewish leaders had not only taken cognizance of Him, but had determined upon a violent course in order to put Him out of the way. Officialdom had determined His death. Only question was fashioning of an opportune moment. In official circles this Jesus was regarded with flaming and unreasoning hatred. Priesthood, Pharisees, Sadducees, were all united and in vehement rejection of Jesus.

b) Reason for this rejection was found in Messianic claims of Jesus. Savior was becoming more outspoken in His claims of Messiahship. His miracles and the spotlessness of His character were winning the acclaim of populace. This Jesus did not fit into picture which officialdom had drawn of the coming Messiah. He was proving a disruptive influence in their religious system. There could be no compromise between His simple religion of repentance and grace and the rigid formalism with which they had surrounded themselves. This Jesus presented a serious problem. Only solution they had for this problem was elimination of Jesus.

C) What did people think of Him? We know, of course, that there were many who had enthusiastically followed this Jesus. But there were also many who were deeply perplexed regarding His identity, and this perplexity was caused by uncertain, hesitating policy of religious leaders, vv. 25. 26. Well-founded rumor was that officials had determined to kill Jesus. But now they neither tackled Him in argument nor refuted His self-vindication. Neither did they arrest Him in order to carry out their murderous project. People asked themselves, "Have they altered their minds? Are they convinced of His claims? Has He successfully rebutted their charges? Can it be that the rulers indeed know that He is the Christ?"

Consensus of opinion seemed to be that whatever reasons officials might have for their hesitancy, this Jesus could not well be Messiah, v. 27. They argued that they knew this Jesus too well. They knew His parentage, the place of His early life, father and mother, brothers and sisters. They found in Him none of the mystery which they anticipated in Messiah. Tradition had gathered that Messiah would make a sudden descent in the Temple. There would be a dazzling appearance at His enthronement. He would come in clouds of heaven, suddenly and unexpectedly, and "none would declare his generation." Rabbis had surrounded Messiah with most glamorous and fanciful expectations. Pomp and glory would characterize His appearance. And now people argued, We know too much of this Jesus for it to be possible for Him to be the Messiah. He is one of us. There is nothing mysterious about His life and antecedents. And so general opinion, while they waited for official decision of the rulers, was to reject the Messianic claims of this Galilean Prophet.

D) Importance of Jesus Christ as issue in public mind and in public discussion has not diminished in the course of centuries. Jesus Christ is still most widely discussed personage in world. Newspapers, books, and magazines discuss His identity. Biographies of Jesus that have appeared on the market and are still appearing would make a fair-sized library. It is indeed remarkable that a man who died almost two thousand years ago is still so prominent in public eye and in public mind.

a) What do men to-day say regarding Jesus Christ? We still have also in our time a large group of positive, hate-filled rejectors and repudiators. Determination to exterminate this Jesus and His influence is still active. We have demonstrations of it in Russian Communism and in such organizations as the American Association for the Spreading of Atheism. Men still claim Christ to be a hindrance to progress, enemy to true culture, disrupter of true spirit of civilization. Market is flooded to-day with books of violent antichristian character.

b) Standpoint of modern religious leaders.

aa) Many of the religious leaders of to-day are just as violently opposed to claims of Jesus as were Jewish leaders, but they have adopted much more insidious methods of antagonism. They assume attitude of friendliness toward Jesus. They laud His character. They extol His virtues. They greet Him as influential moralist. But they are just as uncompromising in their rejection of claims that He makes of being the world's Savior.

bb) Reasons for their rejection are fundamentally same as those which animated Jewish leaders. Jesus does not fit in with their preconceived religious system. Jewish society was based on pride and self-righteousness. Religion of Modernism is built on same foundation. Jesus cannot be made to fit in with this system. He is disruptive of its very principles.

c) Standpoint of the people.

aa) People are naturally also to-day following direction of their leaders, and again position of leaders is causing perplexity. People are asking, What do these leaders really believe? Are they for or against this Christ? Do they accept Him or reject Him? What are we to make of their alternating praise and condemnation? Why do they not take a firm stand either for or against Him? Why this compromising position?

bb) But people have naturally been influenced by the vacillating standpoint of their leaders against claims of Jesus Christ, and again their reasons are same as those which animated the inhabitants of Jerusalem: This Jesus is such a humble, simple Person. There is nothing mysterious about Him. He associates with the common people. He places all people on same level. He will recognize no castes and classes. He claims that all are sinners and have come short of the glory of God. Surely that can't be right. The claims of this Jesus can't be tenable. And so the majority reject Him definitely or, at least, leave their own attitude regarding Him in abeyance. But in all these human conjectures there is doubt, uncertainty — lack of faith and conviction.

2.

Let us now consider what Jesus says of Himself.

A) We read in the text that when Jesus heard discussion among people and erroneous conclusions to which they were coming, "then cried Jesus in the Temple as He taught." He cried with a loud voice. It was a trumpet-call which summoned attention of people to Himself.

B) What does He tell them? "Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am." He cheerfully concedes that they have superficial knowledge concerning Him. Of course they did. And this knowledge was highly significant. Such knowledge of His birthplace, family, provincial training, Galilean ministry, were to be proofs to them of His humanity. He indeed belonged to their race, was bone of their bone. As a matter of fact, so the prophets had prophesied. Place of His birth was foretold. Circumstances of His lowliness were prophetically described. Instead of knowledge of His humble condition being offensive to them, it should really be to them a proof and corroboration of truth of His claims, for *He was of the house and lineage of David.*

a) Jesus then proceeds to tell them that in spite of His lowly origin He is still divine. "I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true." We have here once more a presentation of the twofold nature of Jesus. He had come into this lowliness divinely sent, God in the flesh. The Son of God had become man. He had been sent with a definite purpose, and that definite purpose Jesus had frequently announced. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He had frequently made the claim of being divine. He stated that He and the Father were one, that whosoever did not accept and believe the Son did not have the Father. He had come forth from God on the divine mission of salvation. Conditions of His humble humanity were necessary for carrying out the purpose for which He had been sent. His words indicate to Jews: I have not come prompted by mere human whim and purpose or desire for self-glorification. My mission is that of salvation, and for this the Son of God had to become man.

b) He then proceeds to tell them of the dire results of their rejection of Him. He tells them directly that He had come from, and had been sent by, the Father, "whom ye know not. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." This was a serious rebuke of the entire system which prevailed at Jerusalem. Inhabitants of the sacred city were suffering grievously from superstitious limitations of their own faith, from traditions, symbolism, form, which had well-nigh strangled the underlying truths. Jesus tells them that in spite of all their religiousness they did not know God. They had lost God, whose great name they thought to honor. He brings out the fundamental fact that there is approach to God only through the atoning merits of God's Son. If Jews reject Jesus as the Savior, they are therewith rejecting God. All their sacrifices, their rites and ceremonies, would lose all power and significance unless they were connected with living faith in Him whom God had sent. It was a terrific truth, which aroused the Jews to such fury of resentment that they came to lay violent hands on Him.

C) Jesus makes this same statement to the modern world. Means of salvation have not changed. Passage of men to heaven has not been rerouted. All progress that man has made has not altered his crying need for a Savior. Rejection of Jesus to-day means that there is no other approach to God. If claims of Jesus are repudiated, God is not a Father, but stern, implacable Judge. All religious activities and services of modern rejectors of Jesus are but merest gestures. God's heart and ear are closed unless appeal is made through faith in merits of His only-begotten Son.

That is indeed strong language for a virtuous modern religionist. He has surrounded himself with an impressive program of virtues and good works. He has flow of pious language. He is active in deeds of charity and benevolence, and he clothes these deeds in religious garb. And yet unless he accepts and recognizes Jesus as what He claims to be, it may be very definitely stated that he does not know God. He does not know God in His love, in His gracious purpose. And any rejection of love of God as manifested in Christ Jesus means the necessity of dealing with God in His justice and in His wrath.

D) There is a cheering conclusion to our text, v. 31. And so to-day there are many who still believe with fervent hearts in Jesus Christ as the God-sent Savior. Gospel of Christ is still a power of God unto salvation. There are still many who give correct answer to question "Who is Jesus Christ?" John 3, 16.

The question as to identity of Jesus is one which the Savior makes individual and personal. It isn't case of, What do people in America say of Jesus? What do inhabitants of your town or members of your church or family say of Jesus? Question is put directly to individual: "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" Our souls will be judged before God separately, and there is salvation in none other and none other name is given among men whereby we may be saved. It is this Jesus who is held up to us in the Word of God as the Determiner of our eternal destiny. And thus there is no more important question in life than the question "Who is Jesus Christ?" May our answer be that which Peter gave when the question "What think ye of Christ?" was put to disciples, namely, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"! PAUL LINDEMANN.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 7, 36—50.

Man was at first a glorious being. God took special care in creating him, Gen. 2, 7. God made man "in His own image," Gen. 1, 27. Righteousness and true holiness were man's chief characteristics when he left the hands of his Maker, Eph. 4, 24.

To-day man is but a *ruin* of his former self. Since the fall of Adam (Gen. 3) wickedness instead of righteousness, sinfulness instead of holiness, characterize him. To-day natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2, 1. All that his heart is able to produce of itself is evil, Matt. 15, 19. All the worth-while accomplishments of natural man are products, not of his heart, but of his mind. His heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," Jer. 17, 9.

And this deplorable condition of natural man is universal. It holds in its grasp all the children of Adam. "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. 3, 22. 23. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom. 3, 12—18.

And as far as man's own ability goes to change his condition, it is a *hopeless* ruin. A corpse cannot produce life within itself. Eternal death is inevitable.

And yet there is hope. Christ came into the world that man might have remission of sins and life eternal. There *is* a way of escape. Man having obtained forgiveness of his sins, what then? Let us now consider —

A Sinner Turned Saint.

1. A real sinner.

a) "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was *a sinner,*" v. 37. "Her sins, which are *many,*" v. 47. Sins are real. Although given so little thought and attention by many people and held to be nothing more than "growing-pains" by some, for instance, the Modernists, sinning is nevertheless a very serious matter. Man's sins are a wall that separates between him and his Maker. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you," Is. 59, 2. This world is a vale of tears, and sin has made it what it is, Gen. 3, 16—19.

b) Sin is the transgression of the holy Law of God, 1 John 3, 4, and therefore an offense against God Himself. Sins committed against men are sins also, aye, chiefly, against God, for they are violations of God's commandments. David says: "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight," Ps. 51, 4. He is referring to the darkest chapter of his history, 2 Sam. 11. David had taken Uriah's wife, and he had taken Uriah's life. Surely he had sinned against Uriah, whether Uriah knew it or not. But above all had David sinned against God, the Fifth and Sixth Commandments of whose Law he had transgressed. "The thing that David had done *displeased the Lord,"* 2 Sam. 11, 27.

c) God cannot tolerate sin. Sin calls down upon the one guilty of it God's wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. Very emphatically has God said: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. 18, 4. 20, and: "The wages of sin is death," Rom. 6, 23. Compare Gen. 2, 17; Rom. 5, 12; Jas. 1, 15. Nor does the number or gravity of one's sins make any difference. Five hundred pence or fifty (text, v. 41), one sin or a thousand, open or secret sins, sins of commission or of omission — as long as a desire, thought, word, deed, or neglect, is in violation of a commandment of God, it is on the part of him who is responsible for it a sin, a coming short of the glory of God; and God, ever true to His word, must punish him. God *does* punish. Examples: Deluge, Gen. 7; Sodom, Gen. 19; destruction of Jerusalem, Luke 19, 43. 44; Absalom, 2 Sam. 18, 9—14; Judas Iscariot, Matt. 27, 5; Acts 1, 18.

d) Let no one therefore trifle with sin. To do so is positively dangerous, not only because it turns God against him who is so foolish, with all that this implies for eternity, but also because of the effect such folly has upon man's temporal well-being. Sin is a "reproach" to man, Prov. 14, 34. One who sins sells himself to sin, Rom. 7, 14; sin becomes the master; he, the slave. Sin makes a man "impudent and hard-hearted." While a man lives in trespasses and sins, he is spiritually dead, Eph. 2, 1; and if he departs this life in such a condition, he will rue it eternally in the habitation of the damned.

e) Friend, are you a sinner? *"All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. 3, 23. The "all" includes you. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not," Eccl. 7, 20. Even the "just" are guilty; even the "saints," Phil. 1, 1, need "grace," Phil. 1, 2. Be frank, then, like David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Ps. 51, 5; frank like St. Paul: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing," Rom. 7, 18. "Who can understand (keep a record of) his errors?" Ps. 19, 12. Let no one try to hide his sins. It cannot be done. God knows. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," Prov. 28, 13. Yes, *mercy.*

2. A real turning.

a) Says Jesus to the woman of our text, the woman which was a sinner, a wicked person, perhaps a woman of the street, a prostitute, whose sins were "many": "Thy sins are forgiven," v. 48. Christ said nothing like it to Simon in whose house he sat at meat. Why not? Simon needed forgiveness as well as the woman, v. 42. Evidently he was impenitent, self-righteous. The woman, having repented of her many sins, is absolved from them. Forgiveness was hers since the moment of her repentance, and she knew it. Her entire conduct towards Christ proves that she was aware of it. Christ had already told Simon that her sins were forgiven, v. 47. Now he tells her, too, in the presence of Simon, to reassure her. In view of her many sins and "righteous" Simon's attitude towards her, which was anything but flattering, such a reassurance was called for. "Thy sins are forgiven." "This word out of the Savior's mouth was the seal and surety of her forgiveness. It was the word which inflamed the glow of her faith into a rich fire." (Kretzmann.) "That, then, is the office of Christ, the Lord, which He carries on in the world, namely, that he rebukes sin and forgives sin. He rebukes the sin of those that do not acknowledge their sin, and especially of those that do not want to be sinners and consider themselves holy, as the Pharisee did. He forgives sin to those that feel it and desire forgiveness; as this woman was [such] a sinner." (Luther, quoted by Kretzmann, *Pop. Com.*, Vol. I, 306.)

b) *Forgiveness,* what does it mean? Parable in text, vv. 41. 42. "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly *forgave* them both." The Lord forgives our sins, that is, makes us free from them, Rom. 6, 18; does not impute them to us, Rom. 4, 8; 2 Cor. 5, 9; washes and cleanses us from them, Ps. 51, 2; puts them away, 2 Sam. 12, 13; behind His back, Is. 38, 17; casts them into the depths of the sea, Micah 7, 19; covers them up, Ps. 32, 1; blots them out, Is. 43, 25; 44, 32; Acts 3, 19; remembers them not, Ps. 25, 7.

c) Forgiveness implies *grace.* "And when they had *nothing to pay,* he frankly forgave." Not a penny to pay. Our own good works of no avail. The debt is *canceled.* That is grace, an unmerited favor. "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace,* which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. 1, 9. "By grace are ye saved . . . not of works," Eph. 2, 8. 9. "Justified freely by His grace," Rom. 3, 24. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom. 5, 20.

d) By grace *for Christ's sake.* "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3, 24. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," Eph. 1, 7; Col. 1, 14. "Who gave Himself a ransom for all," 1 Tim. 2, 6, namely, on the cross of Calvary, Eph. 2, 16. By His active and passive obedience Christ fulfilled the Law of God for us, Gal. 4, 4. 5, and atoned for all our sins, 1 John 2, 2. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation," 2 Cor. 5, 19.

e) *Faith.* Faith in the Word of Reconciliation, the Gospel, appropriates the forgiveness of sins which God therein offers, conveys, and seals to men. The Gospel of the crucified Christ is the power of God unto salvation (forgiveness of sins) to every one that believes, Rom. 1, 16. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts 16, 31, that is, have forgiveness of sins. And do not forget: A man's sins, if forgiven at all, are all forgiven. Believe, only believe. "Thy *faith* hath saved thee," text, v. 50. The woman of our text had heard the Gospel and come to faith.

f) *"Saved* thee." Forgiveness of sins spells *salvation.* And "peace." "Go in peace," v. 50. Peace of conscience. Peace with God. The peace which passes all understanding, Phil. 4, 7. Renewal of God's image, Col. 3, 10.

g) Forgiveness of sins, what a treasure! Is it in your possession, friend? Have you, like the woman of our text, come to the knowledge of your sins and their awful consequences? Are you penitent? Have you tasted the grace of God and found forgiveness of all your sins through faith in Jesus Christ? Are you saved? Are you at peace with God and with your conscience? Have you turned? Was yours a real turning? If so, your life will show it. In the same measure and to the same extent in which you understand the meaning of, and appreciate, the forgiveness of your sins will you love and serve Him whose loving-kindness alone is responsible for it.

3. A real saint.

a) *Love of God.* "Tell me which of them will love him most?" v. 42. Here is Simon's answer, of which Christ approves: "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most," v. 43. A debtor who is unable to pay his debts and who because of that fact faces a long term in prison, but whose debts are graciously canceled by his creditor will thereafter most certainly show himself grateful to his benefactor, provided he realizes fully and evaluates properly the grace bestowed upon him. The better one understands sin and its curse, the more will one cherish the forgiveness of one's sins and the blessings, salvation and peace, which go with it; and the less one understands sin and its consequences, the less grateful one will be. Also this: he to whom much is forgiven will love much, and he to whom little is forgiven will love little. V. 47 of the text must be interpreted in the light of v. 42. Love of God on the part of a sinner follows the forgiveness of his sins and never precedes it. The latter belief is held by the Roman Catholic Church, but is strictly contrary to the teachings also of all the rest of Scripture. The woman of our text loved Christ much because she had received much forgiveness. Simon loved him little and showed it (vv. 43—46), for little was forgiven him. "Simon's lack of love proved that he had no forgiveness, in fact, cared nothing about forgiveness in his proud pharisaic mind." (Kretzmann.)

b) Love of God prompts *service of God.* If we study the reaction of the woman of our text to the forgiveness of her sins (vv. 37. 38), we see how it reveals itself in loving service of the Lord. Her heart is given to Christ. Her one desire is to be near Him, to serve Him. She approaches Him in continued penitence, in humble submission,— the first step of such service. She stands at His feet behind Him weeping, in her hands an alabaster box of precious ointment. She washes His feet with her tears and dries them with the hairs of her head. She kisses His feet and anoints them with costly ointment. "She showed her love for Him by a kiss of affection (Ps. 2, 12); her humility, by bathing His feet; her veneration, by breaking a costly box — perhaps procured by a guilty life — and anointing His feet." (Barnes's Notes.) Notice, by way of contrast, the behavior of Simon. He fails to observe even the most common courtesies invariably extended to guests in that day. Truly, this woman was rooted and grounded in love. Christ dwelt in her heart and directed her heart into the love of God, Eph. 3, 17; 2 Thess. 3, 5. Hers was a love "without dissimulation," Rom. 12, 9. An *active* love, active in a God-pleasing way. Her body, soul, and substance was dedicated to the service of Christ and, if so, then also to the service of man.

c) Service of Christ is in great part service of man, Matt. 25, 40. Love of God and love of one's fellow-man go hand in hand, 1 John 4, 20. Even one's enemy is not excluded from this love, Matt. 5, 44; Luke 6, 27. Simon showed no trace of neighborly love towards the penitent woman who entered his home. He made no effort to serve her in any way. On the contrary, he detested her, v. 39. What a sad commentary on this Pharisee's reputed love and service of God!

d) Friend, if you are a Christian indeed, then all your sins are forgiven by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. What is your reaction to this blessed truth? How fervent is your love of God who has redeemed you from sin, Satan, death, and eternal damnation and made you His own dear child and an heir of eternal life? How warm is your love of your neighbor? How strong is your desire to serve the Lord in penitent humility by permitting Him to serve you through

His means of grace? How much are you willing to sacrifice for Him in an effort to alleviate, wherever found, the temporal and spiritual needs of your fellow-men? Can your fellow church-members see that you have and that you appreciate the forgiveness of your sins? Are you letting your light shine before men? Are you active in the support of your congregation, your Synod, its educational institutions and missions? Truly, when a "sinner" becomes a "saint," what less can you expect of him than to love and serve God with all his heart, mind, and soul and to love his neighbor as himself? And the greater a sinner one has been before his justification, the greater a servant of God should he be thereafter. When persecuting Saul became a preaching Paul, he labored "more abundantly than they all," 1 Cor. 15, 10; 2 Cor. 11, 23. Said the colored slave to the kind-hearted man who bought him just to set him free: "Master, you have purchased me and given me my freedom. Now I shall serve you all the days of my life."
Hymn 355. C. T. Spitz.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

John 14, 1—14.

The faith of many a Christian is but *little* faith, faith like that of Christ's disciples on the stormy sea, Matt. 8, 23—27. Christ is with them in the ship; they believe in Him; they appeal to Him for help, crying: "Lord, save us; we perish." But Christ rebukes them, saying: "O ye of little faith!"

Although little faith is *saving* faith as long as it embraces Christ as Lord and Savior (Christ's disciples, although of little faith at the time, did not appeal to Him in vain, Matt. 8, 26b; He saved them. Compare also such passages as John 3, 16; Acts 16, 31, etc., where faith is required unto salvation, and notice how studiously they avoid speaking of degrees of faith), yet little faith is ever the cause of *unduly troubled Christian hearts.* "Why are ye so fearful?" inquires Christ of His disciples and answers the question Himself, saying: "O ye of little faith!" Here were fearful hearts, here the troubles of the heart were enlarged, because of little faith.

Little faith is sufficient unto eternal life, but a strong faith is more desirable for *this life.* More than mere physical strength and human courage is required to keep one from being "greatly moved" (Ps. 62, 2) at a time when one is compelled to cry with David: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me. . . . Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me," Ps. 42, 6. 7.

In our text we find Christ engaged in strengthening the faith of His disciples against present and future troubles of their heart. Christ would also confirm *our* faith with these words, and He welcomes the prayer of His followers: "Lord, increase our faith," Luke 17, 5.

Strong Faith a Healing Balm for Troubled Hearts.

1. Strong faith in the certainty of a blessed eternity;
2. Strong faith in the one and only way to eternal life;
3. Strong faith in the continuation of Christ's work on earth.

1.

Our text is the beginning of Christ's farewell discourse to His disciples as found recorded in John 14—16. The purpose of the entire discourse is given in the opening words: "Let not your hearts be troubled," and again in the closing words: "Be of good cheer." Christ does not expect His disciples to be free from troubles entirely while they are on earth. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," John 16, 33; 15, 19; 2 Tim. 3, 12; *"much* tribulation," Acts 14, 22. "The disciple is not above his master," Matt. 10, 24. Christ Himself was troubled in spirit and soul, John 13, 21; 12, 27; Matt. 26, 38. Christ was not a Stoic. His heart was not a dead, a petrified, but a living heart. He *could* have pity; He *could* sympathize; He *could* weep; and He did. He still is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The disciple's heart is like that of his Master. It can be troubled or moved. It will be troubled often. Sins will trouble it, Ps. 38, 4; his flesh will trouble it, Gal. 5, 17; the world will trouble it, John 15, 19; Satan will trouble it, 1 Pet. 5, 8. The apostles of Jesus were not spared these troubles. But what was lying exceptionally heavy upon their hearts right now was the statement of the Master that He was going away, John 13, 33. Because of that statement the future looked exceedingly dark to them. The Master had told what the nature of His going away would be like, Matt. 20, 17—19. It was not an easy road for Christ to travel. But Christ was comforted when He looked beyond His great Passion, to the day of His resurrection and victory. His disciples, too, should be comforted eventually. The comfort should be theirs now — through faith. And the stronger their faith, the greater should be their comfort. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me," v. 1. Christ knew His disciples would be offended in Him this very night; He told them so, Matt. 26, 31. Now He urges them not to lose faith in Him, in His deity, because of what they should soon behold. Faith, faith, and more faith is what He seeks to engender in them. Read His entire farewell address and see how true this is. He would strengthen their hearts against being overwhelmed with sorrow; He would immunize them against despair.

In order to strengthen their faith in Him, Christ tells His disciples the *purpose* of His going away and impresses them with the *certainty of a blessed eternity.* Christ knows the certainty of a future happiness will help us to bear up under the sufferings of the present time. He says: "In My Father's house are many mansions," v. 2. You can depend upon that. "If it were not so, I would have told you."

Christ has come from the Father's house, John 3, 13. He speaks that He knows and testifies that He has seen, John 3, 11. The Father's house is *heaven*. Deut. 26, 15: "Lord, . . . look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven." Cp. Is. 63, 15; Ps. 33, 13; 2 Chron. 30, 27, etc. "*Father's* house." "*My* Father and *your* Father," John 20, 17. How homelike heaven will be! "Mansions" — not mere huts or hovels. "*Many* mansions." Room for all. When the Prince of the World has no room for you here, over there a mansion, a beautiful home, is awaiting you. John beheld "a great multitude, which no man could number"; these all had found mansions in heaven, and how happy they were! Rev. 7, 9. 10. "I go to prepare a place for you," v. 2. Here was the purpose of Christ's going away. What a going away it was! Gethsemane, Caiaphas's palace, Pilate's court, Golgotha, were some of the milestones along the way. His going meant to drink the cup of sorrow to its bitter dregs. It called for the Shepherd to lay down His life for His sheep. Thus He went to the Father to prepare a place in the Father's house for all who will but accept Him in faith as their personal Savior from sin, Satan, death, and damnation. John 3, 16; 1 John 1, 7; 3, 8; 2 Tim. 1, 10; Is. 53, 4. 5. Having made all preparations for the future and eternal welfare of His followers in the heavenly mansions, the Father's house, Jesus will not leave them to find the way alone. In order that they may be absolutely certain of arriving safe, in order that they may have the strongest possible faith in the certainty of eternal life, Jesus assures His disciples: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that, where I am, there ye may be also," v. 3. What wonderful words! What a wonderfully healing balm for troubled hearts to believe them firmly!

Have you a strong faith in the certainty of eternal happiness, friend? The faith of Christ's apostles was still weak when Christ addressed them there. Jesus said to them: "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," v. 4. Thomas said: "We know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" v. 5. Jesus was right. The apostles knew; He had told them. What they needed was a better understanding of Christ's words and a stronger faith. Their faith had to grow until they arrived at the point where they could say with St. Paul: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8, 18; when their hearts could be cheerful even under the severest trials. They arrived at that point after Pentecost. Have we arrived? Have we that healing balm for troubled hearts, a strong faith in the certainty of a blessed eternity? If we have, may God grant us also *a strong faith in the one and only way to eternal life in heaven!*

2.

Christ has prepared mansions in heaven for all His followers; but will they get there? can they find the way?

Men say that there are many ways to heaven, that every one will get there eventually in his own way so long as he strives upward. However, man cannot be happy in this belief. His own conscience brands it a falsehood. Jesus says that all man-made ways to heaven are wrong ways and lead to eternal destruction. "I am the Way," says He, "no one cometh to the Father but by Me, v. 6. Christ not only points out to us the way to heaven. Indeed, He does that also, does it in His Word. Christ is not only our Guide to heaven. True, He is that also, and well may we sing: "Take Thou my hand and lead me," etc. Nor is Christ merely an example which man must follow if he would reach the heavenly goal. Certainly Christ is to be unto us an example of righteous living on the way to heaven. But striving to follow Christ's example will never bring a man into the mansions of the Father's house. Christ led a sinless life. Mere man cannot do that. Christ was born without sin, while we are sinners, condemned sinners, by birth, John 3, 5. 6. Christ knows but one way to heaven — Himself; and to know that one and only Way to heaven is a sign of true discipleship. To follow that one way means to believe what Luther so confidently confesses in his explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. By this way alone will a sinner come to the Father, Acts 4, 12. Christ says so; and in saying so He speaks the truth. He proceeds in our text: "I am . . . the Truth," v. 6. Christ is the Truth personified. He is the great I AM THAT I AM, Ex. 3, 14; John 8, 58; Rev. 1, 8. 18. The fact of Christ's being the eternal Truth in person vouches for the truth of His words that He is the only Way to heaven. And Christ is "the Life," v. 6, the Life in person. He is the Fountain and Giver of a Christian's present spiritual life as well as of that life which a Christian shall live in heaven. Because of Christ's being the Life, we who believe in Him live spiritually and shall live eternally. "As dying, and, behold, we live," 2 Cor. 6, 9. "Christ liveth in me," Gal. 2, 20. Thus Christ comforts His apostles against present and future troubles of the heart.

And truly here is something else which will speedily change mountains of trouble into molehills of trouble if it be but firmly laid hold upon in faith. Not only is eternal life in the mansions above certain unto Christ's followers, but there is also a sure way to reach it. Christ is the Way, a way that can never be destroyed or made impassable. The more firmly we believe that eternal salvation comes not by our own merits or good works, but alone by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, the greater will be our comfort in the hour of tribulation. Knowing that mansions in heaven are awaiting them at the end of the road, knowing that they cannot miss the road as long as they cling in faith to Christ as their one and only Savior, the troubles which come their way because of their Christianity will, *the stronger their faith,* the longer the more be considered by the Christians as "joys," Jas. 1, 2, and honors, Acts 5, 41. And to strengthen the faith of His disciples, these words regarding the one and only way to eternal life were spoken by the Master. Let us note again that the disciples needed it. They desired to see the Father with the eyes of their body, Philip claiming that then they would be satisfied, v. 8. Christ's answer: vv. 9—11. "In Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9. His words, John 7, 46; His works, John 5, 36; 10, 25. 26; His numerous miracles, prove this. They did not yet plainly see in Jesus the only sure way to heaven, and this served to magnify their troubles. To dispel the spiritual denseness and blindness still in evidence among them and to fortify them against eventual despair, Jesus tells them the wonderful Gospel-truths again and again. And for the same reason the same kind of preaching must go on among the Christians to the end of days. There is so much sorrow among Christians, so much distress, so much complaining, simply because there is so much little faith among them. How about us? Have we that firm faith in Christ as the only, but sure Way to eternal life which is such a wonderful healing balm for troubled hearts? Hymn 99, 3.

3.

Strong faith in the continuation of Christ's work on earth likewise is essential if we would be cheerful in spite of tribulations. Here are a few questions that perhaps agitated the minds of the apostles and caused them to worry: Will the Master's work cease on earth after His departure? Will His visible presence on earth be required to bring His work to a successful conclusion? Christ's voice, was it no longer to be heard on the earth? His miracles, were they no longer to be performed? They had received so much strengthening of faith, so much comfort therefrom.

Christ speaking to them, v. 12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Notice the solemn double affirmation. He means to say: Do not trouble your hearts about the future of My kingdom on earth. That future is taken care of. The Church shall go on, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." They, His disciples, should continue the work. He would enable them to do the works which heretofore He Himself had done. Christ had performed great works. The blind received their sight, and the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them, Matt. 11, 5. Christ had performed these works to corroborate His teaching that He was the promised Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world. His apostles should perform similar miracles to establish their ministry. "The works that I do shall ye do also," v. 12. Cp. Mark 16, 17. 18; Luke 10, 19. They did the works: Acts 28, 5; 5, 12. 15. 16; 8, 7; 3, 1—8; 9, 32—34; 14, 8—10; 16, 16—18; 20, 9—12; 9, 36—40; etc. "And *greater* works than these shall ye do," v. 12. Filled with power from on high, they, the apostles, should preach Christ and, in so doing, should perform signs greater than those the Master had done, namely, waken men from spiritual death. To convert a sinner from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God is in Christ's eyes a greater work than the raising of Lazarus from the dead. "Not as though Jesus had not converted men by His preaching. But the great work of the New Testament, the gathering of the Christian Church through the preaching of the Gospel, did not really begin till after Pentecost." Christ made possible the performance of these great works by His followers by His *going to the Father,* v. 12, with all that this implies, namely, the entire work of redemption. Christ, of course, Himself does these works through His followers. They are done in His name. This is clear from vv. 13. 14, where the Master speaks of prayer in His name. Such prayer is essential if Christ's work is to go on. The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer; Matt. 9, 37. 38; Eph. 6, 19. Firm faith in these words of Jesus, strong faith in prayer, strong faith in the continuation and final triumph of Christ's work on earth, what a wonderfully healing balm for the troubled hearts of church-workers!

Have *we* that faith? Are we troubled about empty mission-treasuries? about indifferent and lax church-members? about a lack of workers? The Lord's work *will* go on. His cause must triumph in the end in spite of Modernism, sectarianism, unionism, Romanism, or any other antichristian "ism." The stronger our faith in these wonderful promises of Christ, the less we shall fear. The Lord shall yet consume His enemies with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy them with the brightness of His coming, 2 Thess. 2, 8. "Lord, increase our faith." Then we shall be able to say with St. Paul: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed," 2 Cor. 4, 8. 9.

Summarize. Conclude with 2 Thess. 2, 16. 17. C. T. SPITZ.

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 22, 23—33.

"On that day," etc. Jesus had just silenced the Pharisees. Hoping to outdo their old rivals, anxious to try their skill, the Sadducees came to Christ. Although they were bitter opponents otherwise, in their enmity against Jesus the Sadducees are ready to make common cause with the Pharisees. They try to entangle Christ and ridicule His teachings. By misusing the Scriptures, Deut. 25, 5, etc., they tried to show the absurdity of the resurrection from the dead. The enemies felt sure that Jesus would be compelled to retract His teachings and admit that there can be no resurrection.

But the Lord answers: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God." He goes on to furnish incontrovertible proof for the doctrine of the resurrection and then explains the condition of the perfected saints in heaven. Since this touches an important doctrine of our Christian faith and has such a bearing on our happiness, we ought to welcome the opportunity to become strengthened in our fond hope.

Hold Fast to the Fond Hope of the Resurrection.

1.

It is a *sure hope,* founded on the Word of God. The Lord adduces the proof in our text. The Sadducees did not raise the question of the resurrection openly. They tried to veil their real purpose. But Jesus detected their cunning. The Sadducees had quoted the case of the woman in support of their idea. Jesus penetrated their scheme and made reply to their denial. The command of Moses, Deut. 25, 5ff., did not necessitate the conclusion which the Sadducees had drawn. After the Lord had called attention to their error and their ignorance of Scripture, He said: vv. 29. 30. In heaven the relations will be different since there will be no necessity of propagating the human race. The laws of marriage will not apply in heaven. Cp. Luke 20, 36.

Now note the evidence which Christ produced to prove the resurrection, vv. 31. 32. Who would imagine that the Lord could prove the resurrection from these words? But the proof is there, and His bitter enemies could not deny that He was right. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then they must exist. Death did not destroy them. The believers of old are not dead in the sight of God. And God will reveal this on the Last Day by raising them from the dead and giving them eternal life. The Sadducees were silenced. They had to admit that they did not know the Scriptures.

The Christian should never allow his faith in the resurrection to be shaken. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Job 19; Dan. 12; John 5, 28; 1 Cor. 15. Our fond hope has a sure foundation. Reply to those who deny the resurrection: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 12—26.

2.

Without this hope, life is a dismal and dreary path. The Sadducees were true representatives of the children of this world. The worldling seeks his heaven here on earth. The only maxim he knows: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." There are many who deny all spiritual existence, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection after death. But their own conscience condemns them. Surely those people are to be pitied who have no higher and nobler purpose in life. Think of their disappointments. After their slavish toil and mad chase after the vanities of this life they have never found true happiness. If you want a recipe for a miserable existence, then fix your heart on the things of this world, Matt. 6, 32. 33.

What will the poor worldling do in the time of trouble and sorrow? He has no comfort in the hour of trial and sufferings. He cannot say: "I know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." He may argue, "You must accept what Fate has in store for you; yield to the inevitable." What comfort is there in that thought? If we could look into the hearts of those who deny the resurrection, we would soon notice that they have no rest or peace. There is no anchor for the soul. That explains their futile efforts to drown their sorrows in the cup of pleasure.

Picture the deplorable condition of those unfortunate people when they must depart this life. Passing through the valley of the shadow of death, they see no ray of light. There is nothing to which they can cling, because they must leave their earthly possessions behind. The world sings the praises of the man who has gained wealth and fame. "What doth it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Matt. 16, 26.

"After the joys of earth, after its songs of mirth, after its hours of light, after its dreams so bright, what then? Only an empty name, only a weary frame, only a conscious smart, only an aching heart! Ah, then a sad farewell to a world loved too well — and then the judgment-throne, then the last hope gone, then all the woes that dwell in an eternal hell."

Without the hope of a resurrection-life, this life is a dark and dreary path and will finally end in utter despair and eternal misery.

3.

The hope of the resurrection to eternal life brightens our path and gives true comfort in the hour of death. Here the Christians are still hedged in by many limitations. The same burdens and sorrows depress us. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We know that the treasures and gaieties of this world do not satisfy. We are reminded every day of the fact that our years are like a tale that is quickly told. How can men live from day to day without the hope which our Christian faith offers? Our true home is above, in the heavenly mansions which Christ has prepared. The path of a believer leads through cross to crown, through death to life. "Ye do not know the *power of God.*" We have a powerful God, who can lead us safely, until we have reached the coveted goal. Job 19, 23—25.

We may suffer a sad bereavement in our home. If our loved ones have fallen asleep in Jesus' arms, they are not dead. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." They are safe in the hands of the all-powerful God. Sooner or later our last hour shall come. Let us thank God that He has given us this hope in Christ Jesus, who said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." When a believer must bid farewell to the scenes of this life, he can join in that hymn of triumph: "Death is swallowed up in victory." Such faith conquers the woes of life, 1 John 5, 4. Therefore Paul said: Phil. 3, 8—11.

Oakland, Cal. GEO. MIEGER.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 13, 10—17.

Jesus continued in His efforts to win the Jews for the kingdom of God. He went about and preached in their synagogs. On one occasion it happened that a woman was present who had a very peculiar affliction, v. 11. She was held in bondage by an evil spirit. The spirit of her infirmity kept her body contracted, preventing her from straightening up or raising her head. Jesus, the kind and loving Savior, had compassion on her. The moment His eyes fell upon her, He spoke to her and delivered this poor sufferer from her infirmity.

The indignation of the ruler of the synagog was aroused, v. 14. He became highly indignant, not because Jesus healed the woman, but because He did it on the Sabbath. He did not attack Christ directly. He addressed His remarks to the audience and struck at Jesus indirectly. But Christ put the ruler to shame and all those who felt as he did in the matter. The forceful answer: vv. 15. 16. The argument of Jesus was so convincing that the Jews were ashamed to say any more.

We notice a great deal of this hypocrisy in our day. Too much importance is attached to external matters, while the important and necessary things are omitted. Luther said: "The right understanding of the Third Commandment is really this, that we use the Sabbath to hear and learn the Word of God, how we may keep all the other commandments, both toward God and our neighbor, and help others to this end through love." There is still a great deal of ignorance in the doctrine of the New Testament Sabbath. Is it sinful to work on Sunday? Why do we worship on Sunday and not on the seventh day of the week? In some respects there is a difference between the Old Testament Sabbath and our New Testament worship; in other respects there is an agreement. Making such a comparison will answer those questions which still perplex many of our Christians.

The Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sunday.

1. Their difference. *2. Their agreement.*

1.

A) The ruler of the synagog became indignant because Jesus healed that woman on the Sabbath. When he said: v. 14b, he referred to the Sabbath laws which God had given to the Jews: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." The Jews were *not* at liberty to sanctify another day. God had pronounced severe judgment upon those who dared to transgress this commandment. This was the order of things in the Old Testament Church until Christ brought a new dispensation. When Jesus, "the Lord of the Sabbath," established His kingdom here on earth, the old Jewish ceremonies and Sabbath laws were abolished. When the Gospel era was ushered in, there was no necessity for the ceremonial laws. Col. 2, 16. 17: "shadows of things to come."

Is our Sunday of divine institution? God has not appointed Sunday or any other day of the week for public worship. There is no day designated that should take the place of the Sabbath. We speak of Sunday as the Lord's Day, but we do not mean to say that the day has been commanded by the Lord. How did it come about that the Christians began to observe the first day of the week? The assembling for worship is a divine command. The Lord has instituted the holy ministry and made provisions for the preaching of the Word. This implies that the children of God should assemble to hear the preaching. "He that is of God heareth God's words." The early Christians therefore agreed upon Sunday as the day of public worship. Making use of their Christian liberty, they selected the first day of the week for the purpose of remembering the resurrection of Christ and called it the Lord's Day.

B) The Lord made reply to the words of the ruler, which were intended as an accusation against Him, addressing His remarks to all those who felt as the ruler did, vv. 15. 16. It was indeed forbidden to work on the Sabbath-day, Ex. 20, 8—10a. Strict observance of this command was enjoined. But God did not forbid works of necessity, deeds of love. That is evident from these words of our Lord. Love always has been the fulfilling of the Law. Is it sinful to work on Sunday? Are there works permissible on other days of the week that are forbidden on Sunday? That is impossible; for the Lord has not set aside and sanctified Sunday as He did the Old Testament Sabbath. The works that are sinful on Sunday are sinful on any other day of the week, as, for example, "the works of the flesh." But we are supposed to hear the Word of God and seek the kingdom of the Lord. The Christians must find time to attend to these duties. If they occupy themselves with the duties of their earthly calling because they have no desire for the heavenly blessings of God's Word and despise the preaching, then they are indeed sinning. All those who think that Sunday is of divine institution, as the Sabbath in the days before Christ, "do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Now we are free from the old laws and ceremonies. See Gal. 5, 1.

2.

In which points is there an agreement between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sunday?

A) Why did the Lord command the Jews to abstain from work on the Sabbath? Lev. 23, 3. The seventh day was the Sabbath of rest, "a holy convocation." Merely resting on the Sabbath was not sanctifying the day. Our text suggests that, if any refused to be kind and helpful to those in need, on the pretense that they were not supposed to work on the Sabbath, they were acting contrary to the intent of the commandment. On the Sabbath the believers should come together for worship, "holy convocation." God promised His gracious presence and blessing if they would seek Him in His sanctuary. If God should perform His work in their hearts, they had to set aside their work to go into the house of the Lord.

This agrees with the purpose for which our Sunday has been selected by Christians. The intention never was that Sunday should be merely a day of rest, as much as man is in need of such rest. Luke 11, 28: "Blessed are they that *hear* the Word of God and keep it." Heb. 10, 25: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." In order to give all an opportunity to gather for public worship and hear the preaching of God's Word, we must agree on a certain time which can be devoted to those important matters. That is what the Third Commandment now reminds us of. (Hymn 125, 1.)

B) Another important fact to be remembered when speaking of the agreement between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sunday is the *spirit of true and acceptable worship.* How did the believers of old worship? Read Ps. 26, 6—8 and 92, 1. 2. Their souls longed for the courts of the Lord, Ps. 84, 2. It was delightful to gather at the place where God had recorded His name.— That is the sentiment of all true worshipers. If we fear God and love His Word, we shall never ask, "Which works are forbidden and which are permitted on Sunday?" We shall say with David: "Lord, I have loved the habitation," etc. What does it mean when Christians are gathered for worship? There they behold the beauty of the Lord in His temple. There they receive spiritual nourishment, strength for the performance of their duties, but, above all, rest and peace for the soul. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

Nor should any one imagine that he has obeyed the Third Commandment if he has attended church on a Sunday. We should daily read God's Word. Family devotion. See Ps. 1. Let us manifest greater love and desire for the one thing needful. Let us remind our hearers of the alarming symptoms noticed in many of our churches, to wit, that many deprive themselves of the blessings of churchgoing. They are absent for no reason whatsoever when their fellow-Christians are assembled in the house of God. Contempt for God's Word is a grievous sin, Prov. 1, 24—29; Luke 10, 38—42. Let us watch lest we grow lukewarm. Pray for grace to love God's sanctuary that you may participate in the eternal celebration of the Sabbath in heaven. Amen.

GEO. MIEGER.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 5, 1—12.

Our text is one of the best-known and most impressive portions of the entire New Testament. It is the beginning of the longest sermon of Jesus on record, the so-called Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon Jesus dwells on the blessedness and the good works of a Christian.

The blessedness of Christians is emphatically and strikingly set forth by Him in our text. Nine times He uses the word *blessed,* and each time at the beginning of a sentence. The text has become known as "the Beatitudes of Jesus." In each of these Beatitudes Jesus shows why Christians are blessed people and wherein their blessedness consists.

To unbelievers these words of Jesus are a mystery, a puzzle, and an absurdity. How ridiculous and absurd these words of our text sound to them: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are they that are persecuted"! As men ordinarily think, they do not associate blessedness with poverty, comfort with mourning, gain with meekness, satisfaction with hunger and thirst, and joy with persecution and the slanders of evil tongues. In general, these things are deprecated as an ill fortune to those who have to endure them.

Yet — Christ is right, and whoever disagrees with Him is wrong. There is a poverty that is blessed, a mourning that is full of comfort, a hunger that is happy, and an ill treatment that is a compliment and cause for congratulation. What these are and what the particular happiness is which is connected with each is clearly set forth in our text. Even we Christians need to be reminded of this time and again; in this way our faith in Christ is strengthened and our blessedness increased; we learn to thank God more sincerely and to consecrate our lives anew to Him in loving service.

May the Lord guide and bless us anew as we inquire on the basis of our text: —

Why Are Christians Truly Blessed, and Wherein Does Their Blessedness Consist?

1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Christ says in the first beatitude and in these words strikes the key-note of our entire text. Out of this beatitude all the others grow. Who are the poor in spirit? A person does not have to be poor in regard to outward wealth and possessions to be poor in spirit; while many in the kingdom of God are poor (1 Cor. 1, 26—28), yet this outward poverty does not in itself imply poverty of spirit. Some children of God were wealthy (Abraham, David, Job, Joseph of Arimathea, and others); again, there are many poor in this world whom Jesus does not pronounce blessed. Being poor in spirit is not a question of outward wealth and poverty, nor does it refer to poverty of mental faculties and gifts or to an apologizing for one's existence in a cringing way before men. Being poor in spirit is an inward poverty, a poverty before God; those who are conscious of their sins and spiritual needs, who "kneel at heaven's gates for Heaven's supplies," and there seek the aid that can come only from God through Christ Jesus, — they are the poor in spirit. Poverty of the spirit is the opposite of pride, self-righteousness, conceit; those who are poor in spirit do not, like the Pharisee in the Temple, boast of their own righteousness, but in all humility pray with the publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," or with King David, "I am poor and needy," Ps. 70, 5.

But wherein lies the blessedness of finding oneself in such a state of spiritual helplessness? Christ answers: "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven includes all the gifts and blessings of God in Christ Jesus: His grace, His pardon, His forgiveness; they are enjoyed here on earth in the Christian Church and finally above in the realm of glory. That kingdom is for Christians only. It means nothing to us until we realize our spiritual poverty, and only then are we in a condition to value and receive it. That kingdom is meant for empty and needy spirits; it was predicted and prepared for such. Its grace and its promises are for none else; for thus says the Lord: "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at My Word." How diligently therefore should we all cultivate this poverty of the spirit in order to be enriched for time and eternity! How gratefully we should acknowledge the blessings that come through it!

2) In the next beatitude, which is closely connected with the first one, Jesus says: "Blessed are they that mourn." Can a blessing come to the Christian out of mourning? Are even his sorrows to be the source of a perpetual benediction to him? Exactly. Christians, too, are subject to the ordinary sorrows of life; they often experience

additional sorrows on account of their faith in Christ. Their greatest sorrow comes from their knowledge of sin. In sin they recognize the source of all evil in this world. They lament over their own sins and those of others (Jesus weeping over Jerusalem); they mourn over them. The Greek word for mourn here signifies grief manifested, too deep for concealment; it is grief as expressed in the first part of our General Confession.

Those who mourn thus over their own sins and the sins of others are blessed; "they shall be comforted"; they look with the eyes of faith to Christ, the Lamb of God, "which taketh away the sin of the world." (Second part of General Confession.) The very relentings and softenings of the soul under the contemplations of a Savior's love have a sweetness with the bitter and bring something of a satisfying new hope, assurance, and joy. Their sins are forgiven, they are strengthened in their sorrow. Special crosses and afflictions may not be taken away altogether (Paul's thorn in the flesh; repeated prayers for removal, 2 Cor. 12, 7); however, their crosses and trials are transformed and transfigured and become the source of blessings unspeakable, because the Lord in His grace, which is new every morning, strengthens, inspires, invigorates, imparts new courage and fresh life. Christians are indeed happy in the midst of their mourning. They will manifest the result of their mourning outwardly toward God and their fellow-men. Christ therefore continues: —

3) "Blessed are the meek." Meekness here means submission to the divine will, a patience and gentleness from religious motives. It is not the lack of grit to maintain the truth. The meek man is not given to revenge; he feels his own sinfulness and has learned to control his temper, to be gentle, patient, and loving; he is never rash and does not unseemly murmur against God because of His dealings with him. Meekness implies great faith and self-control. It is not a weak, but a heroic quality. Consider the example of Christ in His great suffering. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," Prov. 16, 32.

There is blessedness in such meekness of Christians. Their trust in God and their submission to His will shed peace and happiness over everything. Every earthly blessing has a heavenly flavor. "They shall inherit the earth." "The expression 'inherit the earth' here means to possess all manner of goods here on earth. Not that each one should occupy a whole country, — otherwise God would have to create now worlds, — but the goods which God confers upon every one, in that He gives Him wife, children, cattle, house, home, and whatever belongs thereto that he may remain definitely in the land where he lives and be master of his possessions, as Scripture commonly says." (Luther, according to translation in Kretzmann's *Commentary.*)

In the next beatitude Jesus dwells on further progress of the inner life. He says: —

4) "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Understand here the external righteousness, before the world, as we comport ourselves one toward another." (*Luther.*) Riches, success, pleasure, popularity, must be of small value in comparison with it. Christians hunger and thirst after this righteousness. They have desires in regard to it, which burn in them like a craving hunger and an unquenched thirst. It is a lofty, spiritual, and holy ambition. It is "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

And they are blessed in this hunger and thirst; and they bless others. Their cravings shall be met and satisfied. "They shall be filled." The Greek word for "filled" is a very strong and graphic word and expresses complete satisfaction. Daily they shall receive new strength through the grace of God to battle against sin and to abound in good works. Finally in heaven the image of God shall be restored to them completely. Blessed are they even here on earth, for they are lifted through this motive into the highest nobility of a human being along the path of duty. Eternity will reveal how much was accomplished by them through their hunger and thirst after this righteousness.

5) However, the happiness of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness moves them to share it. How it does this Christ shows in His next words: "Blessed are the merciful." This mercy is a distinctly Christian virtue. Mercy is love shown to the needy, the troubled, the sinful, even to those who have wronged us. The heart of the Christian is filled with sympathy and sincere compassion for the temporal and spiritual needs of his fellow-man. The Christian endeavors to help and relieve wherever possible. He would live for others. — "They shall obtain mercy." Here in time and hereafter in eternity. Jesus will graciously reward them for every deed of mercy. In the highest possible way they shall experience the truth of the well-known words of Shakespeare: —

> The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven
> Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed —
> It blesses him that gives and him that takes.

A further development of the inner life is presented by Christ in the next beatitude.

6) "Blessed are the pure in heart." Pure, sincere, in motive, purpose, and love. This beatitude is not for the sinless, but for sinners forgiven. The pure are those who have been purified, whose

robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb — "as white as snow." They shun all sham and hypocrisy. Though they must pursue their daily calling in this world, they are nevertheless to remain unspotted by the world. They must cleanse their hearts through faith in Christ, live in obedience to the Word of God, and crucify their flesh with its lust and wicked desires. — "They shall see God." Already in this world the Christians see God with the eye of faith; they recognize His presence in Word and Sacrament; they see Him in their lives and rejoice over His presence, Is. 17, 7; Ps. 25, 15. How great will be their blessedness when they are called out of this wicked world and in heaven behold God face to face! The purity of their heart will manifest itself outwardly toward men as stated in the next beatitude.

7) "Blessed are the peacemakers." This is the outcome of purity of heart. Christ's peacemakers must have the peace they bring. Peacemakers means the exact opposite of the quarrelsome, the fault-finders, the murmurers, and also of those who do not care whether there is peace or not. Peacemakers are those who try to reconcile men who are at variance; who seek to bring peace to the restless and troubled; who seek, like the Master, to reconcile men to God, to bring divine peace into sinful souls by leading them to the Prince of Peace. This does not mean that we are not to oppose that which is wrong or disturb the quiet of corruption and crime. Nothing is settled till it is settled right.

The peacemakers "shall be called the children of God." Children of God! Their blessedness consists in this, that they shall be recognized as children of God, that God is their Father, Christ their Brother, and heaven their heritage.

In the last beatitude, Christ dwells on the great test in the perfection of happiness.

8) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Persecution is sure to come to those who try to live up to these beatitudes and promulgate them in an evil world. Those who through their works and words exert influence in this wicked world will arouse hatred and opposition. Note that there are two conditions. It must be for "righteousness'" sake. The cause must be right and also the way in which it is presented. The matter of it is often spoiled by the manner of it. Many a person has been persecuted for His un-Christlike way. The persecution must also come over us "falsely." The charges preferred against us must be untrue. Persecution and suffering in themselves do not merit a blessing.

And what is the blessing? "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The blessings of this kingdom for time and eternity far outweigh all persecutions in this world. All the persecutions of the hosts of unbelievers and the gates of hell cannot rob the Christian of this blessed kingdom. It is so glorious that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with it, Rom. 8, 17. 18.

9) Finally Jesus applies this truth to His disciples in the words: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." "He mentions various forms of persecution; He emphasizes again that they must suffer innocently and for His sake and then urges them to 'rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.'" A great and special reward of grace is promised to the Christians for all eternity. They are reminded of the fact that, if they are persecuted, etc., they are in good company; the holy prophets of God were also persecuted. However, they remained faithful to their Lord and zealous in their work and were blessed in spite of all the opposition of their times. What was possible then is possible now. The same Lord and Savior through His same almighty Word would keep us firm and steadfast in true faith and blessedness to the end. If we diligently use the means of grace, if we watch and pray, we, too, shall succeed by the grace of God.

Friends, do these words of Christ apply to you? Are you a blessed child of God? Do you realize that it is only through Christ that you can be truly blessed? Are you grateful to God for leading you to the fountain of all bliss and happiness through His Word and Sacraments? Are you striving after all the Christian virtues?

The Lord grant that the Beatitudes of Jesus may apply to each of us and that we consecrate our life anew to Him who sacrificed His life for us; and may we confidently say with the Apostle Paul: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord," Rom. 8, 38. 39.

HENRY KOWERT.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 10, 40—42.

There are so many obstacles and dangers and disappointments connected with the work of the Church of Christ that true courage is required on the part of every believer at all times.

It is remarkable how much a small, insignificant group of workers in the kingdom of God can do if they are completely consecrated to their tasks and full of courage and enthusiasm. (Twelve disciples; small number of congregations organizing Missouri Synod.)

It is appalling to note how little a large number of people will accomplish if they are discouraged, lose heart, and fear to go forward.

And yet, every faithful Christian, every sincere servant of the Lord, is in danger of becoming discouraged and of neglecting the work entrusted to Him by the Lord. Even great and mighty men in the kingdom of God have had their days of discouragement and despondency. (Moses, Ex. 4, 1; 14, 15; Elijah, 1 Kings 19, 4; Jonah, Jonah 4, 3. 8; Job, Job 3, 1, etc.)

How is discouragement to be overcome? There is only one way, and that is through the Word of God. In our text we have a special word of encouragement from Jesus Himself (for every right kind of church-work); it is a word that includes every service in His kingdom, from the greatest to the smallest; it is a word from the heart of Christ to the heart of every Christian and should be a source of constant encouragement to all; it is a word for you and for me to-day and for all times.

What is it that Christ would impress upon us in our text by way of special encouragement? It is the great, inspiring truth that He Himself is with us, in back of us, in all our church-work. Let us therefore under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit ponder: —

Jesus Himself Is with Us in All Our Church-Work.

1. His authority for it; 2. His blessing upon it;
3. His gracious reward unto it.

1.

Our text forms the climax of a memorable address of Jesus to His disciples; in it He commissioned them to go forth and to preach the Gospel and to perform miracles in His name; He informed them that in this work they would encounter enmity, opposition, and persecution, that great and mighty forces would combine and conspire against them, and that their very lives would be in peril for His name's sake. Nevertheless He would have them go forth fearlessly and courageously and perform their work without fear or favor. How could He expect this of them? Were they not frequently fearful and of little faith even in His presence? How would it be possible for them to go forth without Him and fearlessly to face a world of opposition? In our text Jesus shows them why they should be courageous and fearless in their work in His name. He says: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me." In other words: Whatever deeds of kindness are done to you by those who accept your message and thus identify themselves with you in your work is done unto Me; for you go forth as My ambassadors, I am sending you, My authority is back of you, you go in My name, you do the work that I, your Lord and Master, order, you proclaim My message. "He that heareth you heareth Me." Remember therefore at all times that you have My divine authority for your message and your work and that I am with you in all your work. This fact is to encourage you day after day in your manifold trials.

Surely the fact thus revealed and emphasized by Christ in our text must have been most encouraging to the disciples and to all those who received them. Do they also apply to us and to our church-work? Have we any authority of Christ for our work to-day? Most assuredly. Christ Jesus not only atoned for the sins of the world by suffering and dying upon the cross as man's Representative, but He also made provisions for bringing the glad tidings of salvation by grace through faith in Him and His work to the world unto the end of time. Before ascending into heaven, He issued His command, which is meant for all believers of all times, saying: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In various passages of the Bible He clearly shows that it is His will that believers organize into congregations, call those who are to preach and teach the Word of God as the representatives of Christ, "overseers of the congregation," Acts 20, 28, and as ambassadors of Christ carry on His work, 2 Cor. 5, 20. Every duly called servant of the Lord, every pastor and missionary of our Church throughout the world, is working in the name and by the authority of Christ Himself, is an ambassador of Christ. It is encouraging to a duly commissioned ambassador from a great and mighty nation to know that he is sent by His nation, that He represents it, that the nation is back of him and his work; how much more encouraging should it be for a servant of Christ to know that he is an ambassador of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

These words of Christ should also be an encouragement to all who hear His ambassadors. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me"; that is, whatever you who hear My ambassadors do unto them is done unto Me; you do it out of gratitude to Me and because of My claim upon you; your service rendered unto them and in conjunction with them is rendered unto Me. Hearers also have divine authority for their deeds of kindness, for their cooperation in the upbuilding of God's saving kingdom on earth. O, then, let pastors and those who hear them ever be mindful of the blessed fact that they have the authority of Christ for their message and work and that He is back of them in all their church endeavors to the salvation of immortal souls.

2.

However, these words of Christ are to be an encouragement also for another reason. They show very plainly that the work of the disciples as His ambassadors was not to be in vain. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me."

To be sure, there would be violent opposition; attempts would be made by all the forces of evil to frustrate the work of the Lord through His disciples; their message would be ridiculed, and they themselves would be persecuted unto death. In spite of all this Jesus says: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me." Hence there will always be some who receive them, show kindness to them in various ways, because they accept their message as God's message, join them in their soul-saving work, and share their dangers with them. Why? Why this success? Because Christ Himself would be with them in their work, bless their work, crown it with success.

Was this word of Christ fulfilled? Pentecost with its three thousand converts from among the enemies of Christ gives the answer; yea, every conversion throughout the world in the days of the apostles. How encouraging this must have been to them! How thankful they were for it!

So to-day. Word of Christ not proclaimed in vain, Is. 55, 10. Success not primarily a question of numbers, of outward growth and size, though this also to be appreciated. Seven thousand in Israel. History of our Synod clearly shows truth of these words of Christ. Small beginning in 1847. Few souls, few congregations, few pastors. To-day, over 1,000,000 souls, etc. Colleges, seminaries, etc. Charities.

Our own congregation. Here bring history, etc., concerning local congregation.

Our service this morning.

All evidences for the truth of Christ's word: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me." Should be an encouragement to each and every one. Cf. Rom. 1, 12.

3.

Finally Christ points to a third fact in our text and with it also would encourage us in our church-work; He offers a gracious reward for all work in His kingdom. We read: vv. 41. 42.

In these words Christ promises a special reward to every person in His kingdom for every service rendered, whether it be great or small. Even such an insignificant act as giving a cup of cold water "unto one of these little ones in the name of a disciple" shall never be forgotten, but receive a reward. By referring to such an insignificant act, Christ, of course, does not recommend little service where greater is called for and is in our power. Proportionate giving.

By repeating the phrase "in the name of," "in the name of a prophet," "in the name of a righteous man," "in the name of a disciple," Christ would stress the fact that the motive of all our service in His kingdom must be of the right kind; it must be for the sake of Christ, whose call we should recognize in every act and service; it must be out of love and gratitude to Him. This possible for believers only.

Whatever is done to a believer is regarded by Christ as done to Him. Thus He would express the intimate relation existing between Him and His believers. He is not like an Oriental monarch, who treats his subjects like slaves, but is completely one with them; whatever hurts them hurts Him; whatever cheers them cheers Him; He feels very keenly every kindness, every unkindness, shown them, Matt. 25, 40. There is a Christian solidarity. The benefit or injury of one member affects the whole body and Christ, the Head, 1 Cor. 12, 26. This fact so strikingly presented by Christ in our text, in connection with the reward for service in His kingdom, shows that He is with His disciples in their work at all times. The reward is granted because Christ regards all services as done unto Him personally. (Various kinds of services in the kingdom of God as performed in every congregation for young and old.) Nothing is overlooked, nothing forgotten.

Again and again the Bible promises this reward for services in Christ's kingdom, Matt. 19, 27—30; Gal. 6, 9; 1 Tim. 4, 8.

Wherein does the reward consist? What is it? Often temporal blessings in this world. Widow of Zarephath was provided with meal and oil during the famine, and her son was raised from the dead, because she had befriended Elijah in need, 1 Kings 17, 16. 22. And many a Christian to-day has received temporal blessings for having "received" the servants of God. But the real reward will come in eternity. Throughout eternity proportionate reward in accord with services rendered, Gal. 6, 7; 2 Cor. 9, 6.

Finally it should be noted that Christ says the reward will be "received." It is not merited. It is a reward of *grace*. When a father gives his son a gold watch at graduation, that is a reward of grace. Throughout eternity it will be revealed that Christ Himself was with us in all our church-work.

Let us therefore ever bear in mind the precious words of Christ in our text. Let us become more and more conscious of the fact that Christ Himself is with us, back of us, in our church-work, with His authority, His blessing, His reward, and let us use the facts presented to banish discouragement and to perform the tasks assigned to us by Him more courageously, more zealously, more unselfishly, to the glory of His saving name and the salvation of immortal souls.

Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal
And an immortal crown.

Amen.

HENRY KOWERT.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 6, 43—49.

Our Savior, in the fulfilment of His prophetic office, related many parables from daily life and nature; that is, He inculcated heavenly truths by the medium of comparisons and stories. He really popularized the parable style.

At least forty longer parables may be enumerated. Besides these He told His audiences truths in many short similes or comparisons. Some of these are regarded by some writers as parables also. Several of Christ's parables are recorded by three evangelists, others by two only, and again others by only one writer.

The parables of the Lord have been an inspiration to many writers, leading them to explain the parables in books of their own. In using and considering the parables of Christ, one must remember that there is in each one some point of comparison, and this must be observed. The parable wants to teach one certain thing, not everything. Not all details of the parable dare be stressed or amplified in the comparison; for if this is done, the most nonsensical and misleading lessons might be drawn from the words wherein no lesson was at all intended. (Illustrate!)

In our text, taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, we have two short parables of Christ, spoken at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. These we shall consider to-day.

Two Parables of Jesus Applied to Life.

1. The Parable of the Good Tree. Vv. 43—45.

Our text shows the Lord comparing the heart of a Christian to a good tree that brings forth good fruit at the proper season. He refers to nature and its laws, namely, that it is natural for a good tree to bring forth good fruit. One would not expect anything else in nature. Neither would one expect anything else than good works from the Christian. The fruits are natural and spontaneous. They are the product of the inherent life of the good tree. So also the good works of the Christian are the result of the faith dwelling in his heart, the new life that the Holy Spirit has wrought therein. Here the fruits come spontaneously, too. Cf. Ps. 1, 3; Jude 12.

Christ teaches also by contrast. He pictures the evil, or corrupt, tree to us, v. 43 b, and refers this to the heart of an evil man, v. 45 b.

The thorns and brambles that grow out of an evil heart we find described in Matt. 15, 19. We think of evil words against the Second Commandment; of evil thoughts, pictures, writing, jokes, etc., against the Sixth Commandment. The heart, by nature, is such an evil tree and treasure-chest and constantly sends forth corrupt things. However, such trees meet a disastrous fate. Cf. Matt. 3, 10; 12, 34—36; Jude 15; Gal. 5, 21; 6, 8.

What alone can make a tree good, the heart of man holy, and a treasure-chest full of profitable things? This we see in the Third Article of our Creed, 1 Cor. 12, 3; 2 Cor. 4, 6; Jer. 31, 18; John 15, 5; Phil. 1, 6; Eph. 2, 10.

Every one, man, woman, or child, is either a good or an evil tree. V. 45b shows that your heart, too, is flowing over and producing. Now, what kind of heart have you? What kind of tree are you? Application! What are your fruits, good or evil? Let each prove himself, and let no one deceive himself. This is a serious matter; cf. Prov. 11, 3; Heb. 9, 27.

This first parable is really an earnest call for a close examination and possibly a call unto repentance to us. The other parable of our text is more bracing and comforting, although it would lead us to examine ourselves, too.

2. The Parable of the House Built on the Rock. Vv. 46—49.

In Palestine the heavier buildings were built on rock, even as in our own country. Lighter structures were built on less substantial bases.

Jesus uses this picture in order to teach a lesson regarding our living Christian faith, which rests on rock bottom.

Christ is striking at hypocrisy, at hearing without doing, v. 46. So He introduces this parable. The mere hearing of the Word, without acting according to it, never benefited any one, as Jesus often brought out in His sermons. He admonished His hearers, and He admonishes us to do His Word, Luke 11, 28; 1 Cor. 9, 27; Jas. 1, 25.

The person who hears, but does not do the Word is like the man who builds his house on sand. He has no good foundation, and his house cannot stand against opposition. The sand may be explained as human opinion and understanding, in which some trust. The winds and the streams are temptations and trials, which come to all in this world. At such times the building needs a firm foundation. The superstructure may be ever so beautiful, if the foundation is poor, the house is doomed. The fall of such a house will be great. Examples: Saul, Ahithophel, Balaam. — Apply!

But the person who shapes his life according to the Word of God is far different; he is like the man who has built his house on a rock, after having dug deep into the ground. No storm, no rain, no stream, no wind, can destroy this structure. It is anchored firmly and safely.

Christ and His Word are the Rock. We sing of the Rock of Ages, meaning Christ, and He is so called in the Scriptures, Eph. 2, 20; Col. 2, 7; 1 Cor. 3, 11; Ps. 118, 8.

What is the foundation on which you have built? Have you acted wisely or foolishly? May you sing with all true Christians: "On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand," etc. (Hymn 306, 1.)

Nothing can harm us if we build on that Rock, Rom. 8, 31. 38. 39. (Hymn 273, 3.)

OTTOMAR KRUEGER.

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 10, 46—52.

Faith is not of human origin. Man is spiritually impotent, 1 Cor. 2, 14. Dead in trespasses and sins. Any man may by his own ability go through some of the outward expressions of faith. He can confess with the mouth, recite the Creed, gain a knowledge of what man must believe to be saved. But the true faith, which is trust in the merits of Jesus and the grace of God in Christ, the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11, 1), is beyond man's power even in its smallest beginnings. It is the work of the Holy Ghost, performed through the means of grace." I believe that I cannot," etc.

Of this faith St. John says that it is the victory that overcometh the world, 1 John 5, 4. The conduct of Bartimaeus recounted in our text shows us

How Faith Rises Victorious

1. Over misrepresentation of Jesus; 2. Over obstacles and rebuffs;
3. Over ills and woes; 4. Over self.

1.

V. 46. Jesus *en route* to Jerusalem to begin His Passion. Had left Perea, crossed Jordan, reached Jericho. A great multitude accompanied Him, thinking that the time had come when He would establish His kingdom, expel the Romans, exalt the Jewish nation to the position of a world-power, and make all the other fantastic dreams of the carnally minded Jews come true.

By the wayside sat a blind beggar, v. 46b. Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus and His works, for the report of Jesus and His mighty deeds filled all Jewry. He was sorely in need of the help which Jesus could give. But being blind, he could not come to Jesus himself and, it seems, had no one to lead him. Helpless. Waiting.

Heard a great noise. A multitude was passing by. He asked one of the passers-by what this meant. Received the answer that it was Jesus of Nazareth, v. 47a.

The answer contained a partial truth. "Jesus of Nazareth" was equivalent to the great prophet who, contrary to expectation, had arisen in Galilee; the mighty miracle-worker, who commanded the winds and the waves, healed the sick, made the blind to see, cast out devils, and even raised the dead (daughter of Jairus), etc. It was the man whom the Jews wanted to make king after they had been fed. It was He whose deeds caused the people to glorify God, who had given such power to men, Matt. 9, 8.

But the partial truth was in reality a total misrepresentation. It omitted any mention of the essential thing about Christ: His divinity, the very thing that Jesus sought earnestly to impress on the Jews in the discussion reported John 8 and 9. It omitted the essential item of Peter's confession which elicited the Lord's praise, Matt. 16, 17. It omitted the great fact that Christ had come to seek and to save that which was lost, Luke 19, 10; 4, 18. "Jesus of Nazareth"—good enough as far as it went; not going far enough, it was worthless and, worse, even harmful.

The faith of Bartimaeus rose victorious over the misrepresentation, v. 47. Physically blind, Bartimaeus had received spiritual sight and understanding from the Holy Spirit and exercised keen insight, seeing that which the multitude did not see. Addressing himself to Jesus, he did not say "Jesus of Nazareth," but: v. 47b. Son of David was the technical name of the expected Messiah. See Matt. 22, 42. Son of David implied a confession of Christ's divinity; for David had in spirit called this Son of David, Lord. In His miracles, which to the populace meant only a display of power, Bartimaeus saw God's visiting His people. In the person who performed these miracles he saw the Christ who was sent by the Father. Thus his faith rose victorious over the misrepresentation.

True faith always rises victorious over misrepresentation of Jesus. Similar misrepresentation of Jesus is common to-day. Men take pleasure in praising the rich humanity of Jesus: sympathy for the poor and oppressed, ready help, sage counsel, noble example, hatred of sham, hypocrisy, and formalism. But with that they stop. Hence the names they apply: Jesus of Nazareth, the Carpenter's Son, the Man Nobody Knows. Praise misrepresents Jesus. It misses the essential points: His divinity, His Messiahship.

The true believer sees all that in Jesus self-evidently. But he sees more. What is the more? It is what Bartimaeus saw: David's Son and David's Lord, true God, one with the Father, the beloved Son in a unique sense, very God of very God. (See the Nicene Creed.) It sees in Jesus the "Lamb of God," etc., the Savior, "delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification," "the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

What do you see in Christ? True faith rises victorious over misrepresentation and centers attention on Christ's divinity and Messiahship.

2.

Faith rises victorious over obstacles and rebuffs.

V. 48a. Evidently the people had not understood the real purpose of Christ's coming. For all their enthusiasm they had not appreciated the real significance of His miracles. Satisfied with their spiritual condition, feeling no hunger and thirst for righteousness, they looked only for bread and for earthly glory. Hence they thought it inappropriate that misery should be thrust upon them. Consequently they rebuked Bartimaeus; put obstacles into his way. The faith of Bartimaeus rose victorious over these obstacles, v. 48b.

Victorious also over inward obstacles. Populace thought Bartimaeus unworthy to associate with Jesus, a disturbing element in the general joy of the occasion. Bartimaeus concedes this. His cry, "Have mercy!" is the cry of the beggar who has no claim on the alms he asks. It excludes all notions of worth and merit. Bartimaeus knew and admitted that he had done nothing to deserve the favor and help of Jesus. The only claim he had on Jesus was that Jesus had come to save the lost. When he came forward he had nothing to say for himself. His faith rose victorious over these obstacles and rebuffs because he considered only the known goodness and mercy of Jesus.

Likewise faith always rises victorious over obstacles. To all men who feel their sins, who are conscious of their utter unworthiness in the sight of God, Satan says, as he said to Cain: Your sins are too great to be forgiven you. You don't belong among the saints; yours would be a disturbing presence. But true faith rises victorious over such obstacles. Trusting in the mercy of Jesus, which disdained not Mary when she was possessed by seven devils and despised not the malefactor on the cross, true faith exclaims with Paul: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Faith rises victorious over the sense of its own unworthiness. The believer freely confesses his guilt; pleads guilty of all sins; admits that he daily sins much and deserves nothing but punishment. "Nothing in my hands I bring"; "I am all unrighteousness"; "False and full of sin I am." But he finds in Jesus a fountain of mercy gushing forth plenteous grace to cover all his sins. Victorious!

How about your faith? Can you still enumerate reasons why God should be gracious to you, why He should not condemn you to hell? Then you may have come into the courtyard, but you have not entered into the Holy of Holies of faith. Does the difference seem slight to you? It is the difference between true faith and sham faith. A house built partly on rock and partly on sand is insecure. A faith resting partly on Christ and partly on human merit cannot weather the storm. "Have mercy on me, a sinner," is the prayer of true faith which rises victorious over rebuffs, obstacles, and the sense of unworthiness.

3.

Faith rises victorious over ills and woes.

Vv. 49—51. What a confident word! Requested what was far above human power. Yet blandly uttered, without apology or hesitation. To Bartimaeus it is self-evident that Jesus can grant the petition. Equally self-evident that Jesus is willing to restore the sight of his eyes. Nor is the request in vain, v. 52a. His sight was restored. The faith of Bartimaeus rose victorious over his great ills and woes.

A true believer should never hesitate to approach his Lord with great requests. He holds the Lord to His promises: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."

Especially does the believer ask for pardon. Sins are the greatest evil. The gift of wealth lies in the power of a rich man; the gift of knowledge, in the power of a good teacher; the gift of health, at least partly, in the power of a skilful physician. But who can forgive sins? wash away the stains of conscience? break the habit of sin? remit the consequences of sin? Yes, who except God? And yet, if you truly believe, you rise victorious over the tremendous guilt and power of iniquity. What you confidently expect and ask in Christ's name God will also surely give you. Sins red as crimson become white as snow the moment you believe that Jesus has borne your sins in His body on the tree. Overhead and underground wires send a constant current of electricity into our houses; through faith a constant, never-ending stream of divine mercy, pardon, and power flows into your life with healing effect, creating in you a clean heart and renewing in you a right spirit. As faith lifted Bartimaeus over his ills and woes, so will true faith also make you rise victorious over your ills and woes.

4.

True faith rises victorious over self.

V. 52b. Sight restored, Bartimaeus consecrated himself to Jesus. He employed his newly received power of walking independently to no other purpose than to that of following Jesus, although the actual appearance of Jesus may have contradicted the picture which he had constructed of Him in his imagination. Happiness and satisfaction only in the company of the Savior. Thus his faith rose victorious over self.

To this there is no exception. You confess the faith which Bartimaeus displayed. Your faith has brought you pardon and the love of the heavenly Father. By your faith you have wafted yourselves up and have obtained a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem; of the kingdom of joy prepared for believers; of the rivers of mercy flowing at the Lord's right hand forevermore; of the Rock of Ages, from which gushes forth the water of life, so that each can drink and be satisfied; of the marvels that eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and that have not entered into the heart of man.

Do you also evince this faith? Are you habitually on the side of Jesus? Are you fond about your Father's business? Do you on Sundays and week-days attend to the voice of the Good Shepherd? Do you go about your daily work in the shop, the office, the kitchen, the farm, and endure your daily trials in patience as if you were under the eye of the Lord? True faith rises victorious over self, crucifies it, beholds Jesus only, and follows none but Him.

In all this we are weak. Much sin, much carnal-mindedness, must still be swept away. God's grace and power must still be made perfect in our weakness and turn our impotence into strength. Rejoicing over the faith which God has created and kept within our hearts, we therefore pray: "Yea, Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief."

PAUL F. BENTE.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 14, 25—35.

Is it easy to be a true Christian, or is it difficult to be a true Christian?

In one place Jesus said: "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." That seems to indicate that it is an easy thing to be a Christian, a most delightful thing to be a Christian. But here in our text He tells us: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." And in the first part of the text He mentions among those whom we must forsake father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea, our own life. That certainly is not an easy matter.

Is it not true, my dear Christians, that at times it seems to be such a natural, easy thing to be a Christian? — Why should we not be interested in those beautiful Bible narratives? Why should it be so difficult to pray the Lord's Prayer, to attend Holy Communion at intervals? Is it not delightful to associate with Christians, godly people? Does not the Bible tell us that we should rejoice in the Lord alway? Is it not a comfort to pray to God and cast upon Him all our cares? And yet, times come when it seems so very difficult to live the Christian life, when we are to forgive an enemy who has wronged us, to forgive and feel no more bitterness, no more resentment at the wrong he has done us. O how difficult that is! Then in times of adversity, when God leads us through the deep waters, it is so hard to pray: Thy will be done. Even when Jesus prayed in Gethsemane: "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," His sweat was as drops of blood falling to the ground. That was no easy matter. Are there not many who, as those compared to the seed sown upon the rock, for a time believe, but in the time of temptation fall away? And are there not many who receive the Word with joy, but then go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection?

How is it, then? Is it easy or is it difficult to be a Christian? If we carefully read and weigh what Jesus tells us here in our text, we shall receive true and satisfactory answers to

Two Questions: —

1. What is it that makes it difficult to be a Christian?
2. What is it that makes it easy to be a true Christian?

1.

a) In our text Jesus warns His followers not to think that they can be His true followers by simply following Him about in the body. He tells them of sacrifices, self-denials, and true spiritual righteousness which are required.

There are some to-day who think that a few external practises suffice to make a Christian. They notice that Christians go to the Lord's Supper, go to church, fold their hands, speak prayers, read in the Bible, attend meetings, discuss church affairs, pay something towards the support of the church, sing hymns, avoid gross vices, and they think: What is there so difficult about all this?

Indeed, they may even see advantages in church-membership. Church-membership brings acquaintance with very proper people. Many a one has gained business advantages through church-membership. Advantageous associations, marriages, and other benefits have been obtained through membership in a church of Jesus Christ, even as many of those who followed Christ received food, loaves and fishes, and the cure of their sick without money and without price.

Moreover, through church-membership great temporal influence has been acquired. In the time of the apostles, when it was still somewhat dangerous to be a Christian, we nevertheless find that one man offered Simon Peter money in order that he might obtain the same power which Simon Peter had. Paul tells us of some who supposed that godliness is gain, 1 Tim. 6, 5. Just so to-day many imagine that they are Christians because they have been baptized, confirmed, go to church, participate in the externals, and are receiving all manner of temporal advantages from this church-membership. These people are all laboring under a very, very fatal misapprehension and deception. Though men and women practise all these things that I have mentioned, that by no means guarantees that they are Christians. In the days of Jesus' flesh, men and women may have followed, yea, did actually follow, Him for days and days, endured hardships in part, participated in some of the external advantages, and yet were not true disciples of Jesus. Just to mention one, — think of Judas, who was an officer among the apostles and yet was not a true disciple of Jesus, but a hypocrite and a traitor, a servant of Satan, possessed of the devil. You may be baptized as a child or as an adult, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, and yet not be a Christian. You may go to Communion every Sunday if you have the opportunity and yet not be a Christian. You may attend every service that is held in your church and yet not be a Christian. You may read the Bible, indeed study it intensely, if possible in the original languages, and yet not be a Christian. You may spend hours during the day in prayer and yet not be a Christian. You may contribute one-tenth of all that you have, not only to a church, but to the true visible, or orthodox, Church, the Lutheran Church, and you may fast besides, and yet you may not be a Christian. All these things that I have mentioned, as far as they are external actions, are very easy. But they in themselves, as external acts, do not guarantee any one's Christianity. Christianity is not such an easy matter as to consist in mere external ceremonies, rites, or some few self-abnegations, self-denials, change of food, or even some sacrifices and abstention from gross vice. All they that think that these comparatively easy external matters make a man a Christian are very much mistaken. It is not that easy to be a Christian.

b) Some are not so coarse and foolish as to imagine that external practises make one a Christian. They believe that Christianity is a matter of the heart and that we must actually obey the commandments of God to love God, to love our neighbor. They therefore also strive to participate not only externally, but internally, from the heart, in the practise of those virtues which God commands. Some of these actually believe that they fulfil all the commandments by *trying* to fulfil them, and they think that God requests nothing more. They make Christianity entirely too easy. God never told us, *Try* not to steal, *try* not to slander, *try* to love your neighbor, *try* to love God. Many a one has tried to do something, but could not do it — tried to write a story, but never did it; tried to avoid bankruptcy, but could not avoid it; tried to live a long life, and yet died young. Here the old saying is true: "Miss is as good as a mile." St. James tells us, If we keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all. Christianity does not consist in trying. Those who would reduce the demands of God's Law to a mere command that we should *try* to do our best are simply counterfeiting the Christian religion. They are doing the very thing that a pauper does who sees a millionaire sign a check and receive gold from the teller at the bank and who then also writes such a check and signs the millionaire's name — he tries to draw gold, but instead of the gold he receives two years in the penitentiary. God's Law does not tell us to *try;* God's Law tells us to *do.* We do not pay a man for *trying* to build us a house, but for building a house. We do not pay a man for what he has attempted to do, but for what he has done. Anybody may try anything. Christianity is not that easy. All they who think that Christianity consists merely in trying are simply deceiving themselves.

c) Again there are some who realize that they are falling short in their obedience to God's commandments. They recognize the fact that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but they believe that they can make up for that in some way. They think that by giving alms to the poor or by assisting in the building of a church or of a school or of a college or by giving a present to the pastor they can cover up their misdeeds, sins, and wrongs. These people also are trying to make Christianity easy. No, you cannot make up for anything that you have done wrong.

Note that here in our text Jesus says: "Salt is good; but if it have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned. It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out." Salt is used in order that it may preserve food, that it may resist corruption, and that it may make food palatable; but if this salt has lost its saltiness and simply retains its appearance, its weight, but neither preserves food nor resists corruption nor makes food palatable, what is it good for? Can we then in some way supply what is lacking? No. We throw that salt out, it is absolutely useless. Just so it is with the servant of God. If he does not do God's will, then it is vain for him to think that he can make up for his disobedience, for his uselessness, by doing things which God has never commanded him to do. God wants obedience, not sacrifice, 1 Sam. 15, 22; Matt. 15, 9.

God condemned the Israelites who thought they could substitute ceremonies for godliness, Amos 5, 21—23; Is. 1, 11—14; Jer. 6, 20.

But are we answering our question, What is it that makes it difficult to be a true Christian? Yes, we have been answering the question; for these things must be considered in order to answer this question. Thinking that Christianity means obedience to the Law of God, that is what makes Christianity difficult, so difficult that some have despaired of ever being Christians, so difficult that some have said that Christianity has never been tried, so difficult that many deceive themselves and fool themselves by substituting self-chosen works for the works which God has commanded. As long as you look into the Law of God and study it aright and think that Christianity consists in obeying it, Christianity will not only be difficult for you, but it will be impossible for you. It will be just as impossible for you as it is impossible for you to swim across the ocean in order to reach Europe, just as impossible for you as it is to produce good crops by making your own weather. O let us cease from this folly of trying to do what Paul tried and could not do, what Luther tried and could not do, and what no mere man has ever done! Take to heart what the Lord Jesus tells you here in the text: vv. 28—33. You haven't kept the Law of God till now, you are not keeping it now, and you know very well that you cannot keep it in the future. You cannot build this tower, you cannot fight Satan, the world, and your flesh and remain sinless. And just as the man who undertakes a war or who undertakes the erection of a building for which he has not the means is simply bringing ruin upon himself and upon others, so every one who tries to reach heaven by his obedience to the Law of God is simply preparing destruction for himself and harm for others. If you think Christianity means that, then be sure Christianity is not only difficult, it is simply impossible for you.

2.

But, my dear hearers, our case is not hopeless. True it is also of us what Hosea says of Israel: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself"; but it is equally true of us: "But in Me is thine help." Hos. 13, 9. It is easy to be a Christian if you let your Savior help you, let Him make you true salt that has the proper saltiness in itself. Let Him take the curse of the Law from you and let Him place your cross upon you and then let Him bear you and the cross both. Then it is easy to be a Christian.

a) Learn, first of all, what Christianity means. It does not mean the obedience to some laws, for instance, the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." It does not mean to make up by some self-chosen works or sacrifices whatever you have done amiss. It means to recognize your own sinfulness, your own helplessness. It means that you have learned to say with David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," and to say with St. Paul: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7, 24. And again: Rom. 7, 14—19. You are to do what the drowning man should do whom an expert swimmer is to save: you are to cease struggling, you are to cease trying to save yourself. Let God save you, and it will be easy. What is impossible for the Law is easy for the Gospel. What is impossible for you is easy for Christ, your Savior, Rom. 8, 3.

b) What does the Gospel say to you? You have heard it before, but we must hear it again and again, — we ought to hear it daily: John 3, 16. That is what Paul told that despairing jailer at Philippi, Acts 16, 31. That is what Paul preaches in his Epistle to the Romans and in that to the Galatians. That is what Jesus told Nicodemus. That is what He pictured in His beautiful parables in the fifteenth chapter of Luke.

c) But some one will suggest that, after all, it is not so easy to believe, to continue to believe, and to believe against all the doubts and temptations that assail us, in spite of the fears, trials, and pitfalls of this mortal life. Indeed, it is true, that also is impossible for you according to your natural strength. It is true what we ourselves confess and what we teach our children: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him," etc., 1 Cor. 12, 3. But here again the matter becomes easy if we let God Himself give us the faith, make us children of God through the Gospel, Rom. 1, 16; 1 Pet. 1, 23. Nor can you yourself preserve yourself in this faith. That also is impossible. And if you were to try it, it would make Christianity impossible for you. But God will do that for you. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. 1, 6. You are not kept by your own power, but you are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1, 5.

God preserves you in the same manner in which He made you a Christian, through His Word and through His Sacraments. In spite of the fact that you daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment, He daily and richly forgives all your sins through the Gospel. In spite of your weakness and failures, He through His Word again and again accepts you, raises you up, strengthens you, and fulfils in you what He has promised to all those who wait upon Him, Is. 40, 31.

Burdens you may have to bear, battles you may have to fight, trials you may have to endure; but what of it? It all becomes easy when God supplies the strength, bestows the victory, and holds you and carries you through the trial. Thus it becomes easy to be a Christian, when daily and hourly, continually, we surrender ourselves entirely to Jesus, let Him lead and keep us as our Good Shepherd, let Him supply the strength, let Him pardon our shortcomings, and receive from Him every blessing and, finally, heaven and everlasting life. Rom. 8, 31—39; Hymn 375, 1 and 7. S.

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 17, 24—27.

Nature is a kingdom of exquisite order. In its far-flung realm we find enthroned, high above the will of man, certain fixed laws that govern the physical universe, and night and day proclaim the wisdom and power of the Creator. Ps. 19. Men may discover new planets, but they cannot direct their course. (New trans-Neptunian planet discovered March, 1930, Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Ariz.) Men may build great waterways, but they must look to God for rain. They may link ocean to ocean and cause the desert to blossom as the rose, but in all their work they must bow to the law of gravitation. They may fly from pole to pole, but they cannot interchange the zones and the seasons. Gen. 8, 22.

Human society must submit to certain regulations to be happy and secure. Rules of health and moderation, labor and rest, decency and order, must be observed or paid for dearly. A waterfall must be harnessed to produce power; a magnet must be carefully wound to become strong; a horse must be broken to be useful. A nation, to prosper, must cultivate respect for law and order or go down like a house divided against itself.

This is true also of the Church and of the individual. God is a God of order, of truth, and of right. There are certain laws, ordained by Him, written into the heart, recorded in Scripture, and proclaimed by the Church, which men can flout only at their peril.

In His campaign to destroy the works of the devil, it was the purpose of Christ to begin with obedience to the natural and moral laws of God, to the ceremonial laws of the Church, and to the civil laws of constituted Jewish, Roman, and parental authority.

"Under the Law."

1. The law concerning the Temple tax;
2. The Savior's willingness to submit to it;
3. His majesty in obedience.

1.

A) The application of this law in the Old Testament.

a) It was still in effect. The children of God, including the disciples, were still under the rules of the Old Covenant. The Messiah was in the world, laboring among His own; but His task was not yet completed to a point where He could say of the work the Father had given Him to do, It is finished. The Temple at Jerusalem still His church; Capernaum at the time considered His home. When He returned there one day, certain church-workers approached Peter, saying with some hesitation, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Peter promptly answered yes.

b) Its purpose and meaning. The term used for "tribute" indicates that these men were out collecting for the maintenance of the Temple service. It was in reality a poll-tax imposed on all the men in Israel and amounting to half a shekel, some thirty cents in American money, but in those days the equivalent, probably, of two days wages. This was in addition to the tithing system and the freewill offerings of the Jews. Exodus 30 this individual contribution is called "a ransom for the soul" and "atonement money," by which men were to secure their exemption from the personal service they owed the Lord in His Tabernacle.

c) Consequence if ignored. The ordinance provided that every man of twenty and over should pay this half shekel; the rich should not give more, and the poor should not give less, that there might be no plague among them, Ex. 30, 12. The refusal or neglect of any able-bodied man in Israel to meet this small obligation annually made him liable to divine displeasure, because he failed to do his part to perpetuate the service of the Tabernacle as a memorial before the Lord, Ex. 30, 16.

B) The counterpart of this law in the New Testament.

a) There are laws in the New Testament. It is a mistake to suppose that all the laws of God are in the Old Testament and that we are now free from all monetary and personal obligations toward the kingdom of God. Certainly, all Christendom is bound by the commands to baptize, teach, preach, commune, give, and forgive.

The spirit and moral force of all the Ten Commandments lives on, being repeated and reiterated throughout the New Testament. Yes, Jesus specifically stated that He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil, Matt. 5, 17. The entire Sermon on the Mount is a soul-searching interpretation of the Law. Matt. 22, 37—40 Jesus sums up all the commandments of God in two statements, the two commandments of love. Rom. 13, 10 Paul draws the logical conclusion "Therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." And let no one suppose for a moment that the power of love is weaker than any "Thus saith the Lord" or any "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" of the Old Testament.

b) To whom they apply. All the moral laws, rules, and admonitions of the New Testament certainly apply to the spiritual Israel of to-day, to all true believers in Christ throughout the world. Not as a saving power, but as a bar to sin, a mirror to self, and a guide to good works. Among the good works that God wills to this day are our duties toward the church — to attend it, adhere to it, and contribute towards its maintenance and extension (Catechism, Qu. 193). We are not bound by the tithing system or the Temple tax, but we are constrained by the love of Christ and bound by the words "every man . . .," 2 Cor. 9, 7; 1 Cor. 16, 2.

c) Results if ignored. If all Christians would cast down their tools in the Lord's vineyard and cease to labor and to give, the result would be disastrous to them and to others. They would fall under the judgment of the wicked servant, Matt. 18, 23—35. A man who prays, "Thy kingdom come," and never testifies and never gives, is a hypocrite as surely as the Pharisees of whom the Savior said: Matt. 23, 23. The Church also could not survive, could not lengthen its cords, strengthen its stakes, or preach the Gospel in all the world. It would have to cut off its missions, retrench at home, and finally close its doors. Personal Christianity would be dead, as dead as the salt that has lost its savor, as dead as the light that has gone out. Some might still point the way to heaven, but, like the posts by the wayside, they would not get there. Henry Graham tells of a man who lived fifty years within twenty miles of Niagara Falls without seeing that masterpiece of creation. "I live so near," he explained, "I can go at any time and do not need to spend the money to make a special trip." Some people live within less than twenty miles of the kingdom of God and have never entered it. They may spend their life within twenty blocks of the church, and they never go because of the effort it takes and the little contribution they might be expected to make for the maintenance of the temple service. They burn the candle of life to the world, and on their death-bed perhaps fling the smoke of it into God's face.

2.

A) Christ was not under the Law of necessity, but by choice.

a) Being the King's Son, He was free. He anticipated Peter, vv. 25. 26, saying: "What thinkest thou, Simon, of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute, of their own children or of strangers?" Peter answered, "Of strangers." Jesus said, "Then are the children free." In the preceding chapter, Matt. 16, 16, Peter had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." So Jesus here means to say: I am the King's Son; the Temple is My Father's house and Mine; I am under no obligation, I am free, for the Temple tax was never intended for the Lord of the Temple.

b) Nevertheless He willingly paid the Temple tax. His immediate motive was "lest we offend them," v. 27. But behind this was the greater impelling force of love. Love had brought Him down to earth from heaven. Love had inspired Him to do the Father's will and carry out God's plan of salvation. He chose to be under the Law for us, in our stead, to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons, Gal. 4, 4. This accounts for His circumcision, His presentation in the Temple, His obedience to Mary and Joheph, His baptim, His observance of the Sabbath and of every point of the Law, even to the payment each year of the Temple tax. And more than this, He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. 2, 8—11.

B) Our present status as believers in Christ.

a) We are free from the dominion and curse of the Law. Note plural in text, "children," v. 25, and "we," v. 27. As Luther interprets this passage, the Savior included Peter as a king's son, as sharing already by faith the glorious liberty of the children of God. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," John 8, 36. And so Paul and John later testify, "We are no longer under a schoolmaster," Gal. 3, 25, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," 26, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8, 17, "kings and priests," Rev. 5, 10. It was the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus, John 10, 18, His perfect obedience, His holy, precious, innocent blood, that removed, not the Law, but the curse and dominion of the Law, the strength of sin, the sting of death, so that we may gladly say, "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John 1, 17; Rom. 6, 23; Gal. 5, 1. 18.

b) Nevertheless, being new creatures, we gladly strive to walk the way of the commandments. We know that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. 10, 4. But we dare not abuse our liberty to offend others, 1 Cor. 8, 13; 1 Thess. 5, 22, or as a cloak of maliciousness, 1 Pet. 2, 16, of miserliness, indifference, disobedience, inexcusable neglect. It is a contradiction and an abuse of the Gospel to evade plain Christian duties while you sing, "Jesus paid it all." Our trust must ever rest in the words, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal. 2, 20; but our desire will be to walk in His steps, and our gratitude will be mindful of His words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John 14, 15; John 15, 14.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.
Oh, dearly, dearly, has He loved!
And we must love Him, too,
And trust in His redeeming blood
And try His works to do.

3.

A) His omniscience revealed in the act of obedience.

While humbly agreeing to pay the tribute money, Jesus proceeded to reveal His glory, a divine attribute, which proved that even under the Law He is God. He understood Peter's thought afar off, Ps. 139, 2, before he entered the house, v. 25. And, what is more wonderful, He knew the paths and the fortunes of the fish in the sea. How comforting to have such a God and Savior in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2, 3; who knows all things, John 21, 17; who marks the sparrow's fall, Matt. 10, 29, and the movements of the denizens of the deep! V. 27. Shall He not know your needs and mine, our ambitions, frets, temptations, problems, cares? Shall He not be fully aware of the movements of our foes and the dangers that beset our souls? Even the dead are alive to Him. Their graves may not appear, as Jesus said of the Pharisees; and the men that walk over them may not be aware of them, Luke 11, 44, but He knows their place.

B) His omnipotence revealed in the act of obedience.

Jesus had intimated to Peter that He was of the royal household of the eternal Son of the Father. Produces proof. Not only the sea obeys Him, but also the fish of the sea, v. 27. This seems to be the only instance in which Jesus secured money by means of a miracle. The silver and the gold are His, Hag. 2, 8, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, Ps. 50, 10. Ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah, 1 Kings 17, 6. He, the greater than Elijah, might well have had His wants supplied by angel hands. Or by His touch He might have turned stones not to bread only, but to gold. Instead, He sent Peter about his calling as a fisherman, proving His almighty power and Godhead by leading to his hook a fish with the necessary silver in its mouth. Particular blessing on his labor. If a prince of the Church and the Lord of all were not ashamed of this lowly profession, let us not be ashamed of our occupation, whatever it may be, at home, in shop, store, office, factory, or field. Trust that God will crown our honest toil with an honest livelihood and enough to pay our dues to the church and to give to him that needeth.

C) His loving providence revealed in the act of obedience.

The piece of money found in the fish's mouth was not a didrachma, enough to pay the Savior's dues, but a stater, just twice that amount. Of this, Jesus said to Peter as to a loving friend, "That take and give unto them for me and thee," v. 27. What supreme and loving majesty in the act of lowliest obedience! The Son of God under the Law paying His own and Peter's debt! Easter turned the accursed wood of the cross to shining gold; loving thoughtfulness for others is the crowning glory of the Savior's obedience to the Law. Has He ever forgotten you? Have you ever suffered actual want? Have not all your needs of body and soul been amply supplied? Luke 22, 35. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!" Ps. 103, 2. The lives of the redeemed ought to be as happy and care-free and full of song as that of the birds. During the war an officer noticed a mother bird pouring forth its soul in a flood of song. Presently the cannon roared, shells shrieked overhead, wounded men were carried by; but whenever there was a lull in the conflict, the little bird took up its song. In the conflict of life, amid the accusations of the Law, when darkness falls, let us confidently sing the new song of faith, hope, and ultimate victory.

WALTER F. TROEGER.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 8, 34—38.

One day in March, 1930, near Excelsior Springs, Mo., a passenger train was rushing along at a terrific rate of speed. The fireman, alarmed because there was no slowing up at the crossings and curves and because all signals were being ignored, leaned over to call the engineer and grasped him by the arm, only to find him dead at his post, his rigid fingers clutching the wide-open throttle. The mighty engine was brought under control, and disaster narrowly averted. We can hardly think of a situation more dramatic. A long train, with hundreds of care-free passengers aboard unaware of any danger, thundering along the rails at a perilous speed with no guiding intelligence at its head, only a lifeless form!

Multitudes are going through life like that. They have the priceless treasure of an immortal blood-bought soul aboard; yet they race madly onward, passing by the fountains of grace, despising the warnings of the Law, taking the curves of sin at top speed, and ignoring the villages and crossings where fellow-beings must pass their way. What is their ultimate goal? Is it a crown of wisdom? Is it abundance, pleasure, honor, among men? Whence came they, and whither are they going? No definite answer. Grasping at shadows, pursuing a phantom, with their conscience asleep and spiritual death at the throttle. Unless the Holy Spirit of God prick their conscience with the Law and arouse them with the Gospel and bring their life under control, their journey's end will be certain disaster. Their soul, like a brilliant meteor that has flashed across the heavens, shall go down in night and darkness forever.

The "Supreme Tragedy," Gaining the World and Losing the Soul.

It is brought about in four ways: —

1. *By gaining an education without a knowledge of Christ;*
2. *By gaining the riches of this earth and losing the treasures of heaven;*
3. *By draining the cup of temporal pleasure and missing the happiness of eternal joy;*
4. *By winning the approval of men and meriting the eternal contempt of God.*

1.

A) We all concede that knowledge is power. The Word of God says, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," Prov. 3, 13—18, and, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom," 4, 7. America to-day is spending some four billion dollars a year for educational purposes. Our public and private schools have almost become a national idol. Parents everywhere are trying earnestly to put their children not only through the common grades, but to give them the unquestioned advantages of high-school, college, and university training. And we daily reap the fruits of our investment in numberless evidences of progress, marvelous inventions, time-and-labor-saving devices. Age of specialization. Thorough scientific knowledge in one or more of the wide-spread branches of learning, when properly applied, usually pays big dividends in comfort, service, success, new victories over disease, space, forces of nature. A man may have a fine physique and a naturally commanding appearance, yet if his mannerisms and speech betray ignorance, he must travel a hard road to success.

B) But though secular knowledge has the power to plan, build, create, conquer, it ought not to be the height of human ambition. The mind and memory of man is as frail and elusive as it is facile; and when it fails, the whole structure of learning comes toppling down. Some tombstones may be high and some low, but the dead beneath them all lie on the same level. Authors, orators, poets, musicians, sleep side by side with the ignorant. And where their knowledge has not extended beyond the realm of material things, theirs will be a Christless and hopeless grave. For this reason education without a knowledge of Christ is an abject failure. The same Bible that declares, "Wisdom is the principal thing," also insists that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Ps. 111, 10; Eph. 3, 19; John 17, 3. To know Christ as the Son of God and your Savior who bore the cross for you, who died for you and rose again, who draws you to the Father, saying, "Whosoever . . .," vv. 34. 35, is far more important for time and eternity than all the scientific and historical research work of the world.

C) *Quotations.* — "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women," said Dr. William Lyon Phelps of Yale University, "but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible. Every one who has a thorough knowledge of the Bible may truly be called educated; and no other learning or culture, no matter how extensive or elegant, can form a proper substitute." "The Bible," said Abraham Lincoln, "is the best gift which God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book. All those truths desirable for man are contained in it. But for that book we could not know right from wrong." It is true, with the saving knowledge of the Bible and the Christ of the Bible we have a sure guide in every emergency of life and of death. Without it, we may save our life for a time, v. 35, but the priceless possession of the soul, with its long train of possibilities, shall be lost. The tyrant Nero, not knowing God and the Bible, took the coward's way out in the face of shame and defeat. But Paul, facing the worst that men could do, confidently said, "I am now ready," 2 Tim. 4, 6—8.

2.

A) There seems to be a tremendous satisfaction in amassing a fortune. To add house to house, field to field, bond to bond, jewel to jewel, in fact or in ambition, is no longer the sport of kings, but the daily occupation of millions of American men and women. Success is measured in dollars and cents. Generations ago, men raced across Indian-infested plains and deserts burning with heat to get their share of California's gold. They braved the fury of icy seas, the death-grip of Alaskan winters, if only they might become rich. In ages past learned men sacrificed their health, lost their mind, in the intensive search for the formula that might turn baser metals into silver and gold. To-day the lure is still the same. Bent on greater profits, greater production, greater sales, greater investments, greater wealth. Almost as if Satan had taken us all up into an exceeding high mountain to show us all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and said again, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Matt. 4, 9. It has come to a point where there is little prospect that a poor man shall ever again be elected to the halls of Congress or sit in the counsels of the mighty.

B) Yet the acquisition of wealth ought not to be our highest ambition. Wealth, like wisdom, elusive, uncertain, hard to get and hard to keep. No enduring satisfaction in it. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver . . .," Eccl. 5, 10. We must part company with it at the brink of the grave. When Alexander the Great, who wore the crowns of many kingdoms, lay on his death-bed at the age of 33, he commanded that his hands be left uncovered and open, so that every one might see that as he had brought nothing into the world, he was taking nothing out. And what is worse, in their haste to be rich, many sacrifice everything else worth while — character, honor, faith, hope, Church, religion. 1 Tim. 6, 9. 10. They neglect to take up the cross, fail to consecrate their life to the Christian cause for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, vv. 34. 35. Lay up treasures for themselves, not rich toward God, Luke 12, 21.

C) *Examples.* — Lot chose the well-watered plain of Sodom, not thinking of the danger to his soul. Judas sold and betrayed His Savior for clinking silver, unaware of the price he was to pay. Senator Albert B. Fall leased government oil lands (Teapot Dome) for private exploitation in consideration of an unsecured personal loan of $100,000. But remorse followed exposure: political, social, financial, physical ruin. Group of prominent bankers and brokers indicted at Los Angeles for their part in wrecking the Julian Corporation and defrauding stockholders out of forty million dollars of their life's savings. Jury fixed, prosecuting attorney bribed (Asa Keyes). No conscience, no heart, no soul. It was to such a selfish, if not criminal, man that God said in the parable, "Thou fool . . .," etc., Luke 12, 20; text, v. 36. Let us not for some present deceitful advantage forget God and the needs of His kingdom. Hear, believe, apply the Gospel, "laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven . . .," Matt. 6, 20.

3.

A) There is much in the world to love and to be grateful for. To exist, we had to have pure air, rain, sunshine, food shelter, clothing, but we did not need the flowers. God threw them in to make us happy with their bewitching fragrance and gorgeous array of color. Perhaps we needed the brooks to water the fields and birds to destroy insect pests, but we did not need their song. A loving Creator added their warbling melodies to delight the human ear. We needed fellow-beings in infancy and old age, but God added the gift of unfailing friendship and life-long love. We needed human speech, but God added laughter and smiles to cheer the heart and to lighten our load. — But the world is not satisfied with these things. It craves not only fruit, but forbidden fruit; not only love, but illicit love; not only a wife, but an exchange of wives made legal through easy and unwarranted divorce; "adulterous and sinful generation," v. 38. It wants not only food and drink, but the privilege of gluttony and drunkenness; not only art and humor and entertainment, but nude art, suggestive humor, shocking entertainment. Young people not ready to take part in the continuous round of pleasure, wild parties, dances, youthful lusts, are not considered in it; that's all.

B) Yet to quaff the cup of sensual pleasure, or even of legitimate joy, ought not to be our hope and ambition. Health, like wealth, is fickle, uncertain. Temporal pleasure is temporal, short-lived, easily interrupted and frightened away. Eve had the satisfaction of biting into the forbidden fruit, but its bitter aftertaste of sin and sorrow has remained through the ages. David's fall was followed by years of shame and regret. Belshazzar's drunken feast became a midnight slaughter, Dan. 5. "Keep thyself pure," 1 Tim. 5, 22. "Look not thou upon the wine," Prov. 23, 31—33. "Love not the world," 1 John 2, 15—17; text, v. 36.

C) *Additional illustrations.* — It was a sad spiritual epitaph that Paul wrote for his coworker, 2 Tim. 4, 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." The tragedy of sowing to the flesh and the eternal joy of sowing to the Spirit, Gal. 6, 8. 9. The great renunciation of Moses, Heb. 11, 25. Paul, having missed the hilarity and escapades of a prodigal son and cast his lot with Christ, enjoyed by faith the eternal happiness that goes with the salvation of the soul. Under the heaviest cross he could say, "I reckon . . .," Rom. 8, 18, and, "Eye hath not seen . . .," 1 Cor. 2, 9. 10.

4.

A) Men love to wear the crown of achievement. The praise of many lips is music in their ears. Lindbergh became an international hero overnight. Multitudes would give their soul for his name and fame. Rudoph Valentino, dead three years, still receiving five to ten letters a week from moving-picture admirers. The Pharisees, giving alms to be seen of men, praying on the street corners, had their reward, Matt. 6, 5. World honored Thomas Edison in 1929; postage stamp of incandescent lamp. Honor to whom honor is due, Rom. 13, 7.

B) Yet to gain the fleeting approval of men ought not to be our highest ambition. Fortune most fickle in point of honor among men. In 1919 Woodrow Wilson mightiest and most-talked-of man on earth. Ten years later, on fifth anniversary of his death, one little bouquet of flowers lay at the head of his lonely crypt in the vault of the half-finished Washington cathedral. Sorrowful end of German princess who bartered away her Protestant faith for the crown jewels of Russia. Peter for the favor of a maid and the good will of scoffing warriors denied and said, "I know Him not." Yet that same Jesus was the best Friend he ever had, who bought even those who deny

Him. He is also your Friend. He was slain and redeemed you to God by His blood. Have you ever been ashamed of Him, v. 38, or denied Him in word or deed for the favor of men? Have you made provision for everything else in life, but not for that supreme moment when your soul shall return to the God who gave it? Unspeakable folly, heart-rending tragedy, to bother about approval or disapproval of sinful men when it may mean the eternal disapproval and contempt of God, judgment and separation from Him. Soul priceless jewel in circlet of every man's life. Yet, judging by their conduct and their listless attitude toward Church and Gospel, many esteem it of no value whatsoever.

May God so adjust our sense of values that we may be stirred by the searching question of the text "What shall it profit a man . . .?"! vv. 36. 37. Soul once lost, no reprieve; only fearful looking for of judgment. To-day still day of grace; mercies new every morning. Where we have failed and loved world, repent, believe, look to Jesus to blot out our transgressions, to make our faith strong, take charge of our hearts, govern our lives, that the supreme tragedy may be averted and we may stand at last in His kingdom.

WALTER F. TROEGER.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 13, 44—52.

Matt. 13 contains seven parables of Christ. Telling parables was a new way of teaching. Therefore the disciples asked, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" Christ's answer, v. 12, gives the reason. Because of unreceptiveness on the part of His hearers, Christ spoke to them in parables. He had set forth by word and exhibited by fact (in His miracles) that kingdom of God which He had brought down to earth, open to all believers. The disciples' hearts had been opened to the divine truths spoken by the Savior. To them it was given, given by the heavenly Father, to know the mysteries of God. The great majority of hearers, however, proved unreceptive to His words. Hence this teaching in parables was for judgment. Even what they seemingly had would be taken from them.

On the other hand, how wonderfully illuminating and instructive are these parables to those to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God! What wonderful illustration of divine wisdom! What an incentive to enter deeper into God's plan of salvation revealing His love and mercy for a sinful world; at the same time manifesting the state and condition of those hearts in which the Holy Ghost has begun His blessed work of regeneration!

We have before us to-day the last three of the seven parables. Those of the treasure and the pearl having much in common, though differing in some details. Both picture to us the state and condition of hearts having found in Christ the "one thing needful," thus having the kingdom of God within them. While the Parable of the Drag-net presents to us the kingdom in its final revelation and consummation.

1.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in the field." The kingdom of God, or heaven, is where God rules; it comes to us, as Luther says, "when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit," etc. By nature we are not in this kingdom, but under the power of darkness, under Satan's rule. This rule must be broken. God alone can do this, deliver us from its power, and establish His rule in us.

The kingdom of God has been brought by Christ into this world; but, as the treasure in the field, it is hidden. "The natural man receiveth not," etc.

In the first of these two parables the man was perhaps plowing in the field, his thoughts entirely engrossed in his labor. Suddenly his plowshare grates upon the chest that contained the treasure. Or he may have been sauntering through a neighbor's field, when his eye was attracted by some sign revealing to him a great treasure. Ages before it may have been hidden there. Suddenly he found it, without any effort of his own. It may have changed the whole course of his life.

So, says our Lord, is the kingdom of heaven. Suddenly, in the midst of other thoughts and pursuits, a man is brought face to face with eternal, heavenly things — reading the Bible; hearing a sermon; sudden danger of death, etc.; circumstances that seem purely accidental arrest his attention, turn his mind heavenward. *How* it is that now his mind is open to heavenly things while formerly engrossed entirely by earthly matters, he cannot tell, just as little as the man plowing in the field suddenly, unexpectantly, came upon the treasure. God's hour had come. The Lord had found him.

The second parable introduces us to a man who is seeking something higher. He is not satisfied with ordinary, common pursuits. There is an inward longing and craving in man's heart for truth, happiness. This inward longing he tries to satisfy with what is regarded as noble and praiseworthy — art, science, high aims in the service of his fellow-men, etc. But all these things do not fill the inward void of his soul. He keeps on in his pursuits, changing from one to another, as described in Ecclesiastes. With the same result: "All is vanity." However, he keeps on earnestly, zealously, ceaselessly, — when, all at once, again perhaps as by accident, he finds Christ, salvation in Him, satisfying, filling completely all the longings and cravings of his heart, quenching the hunger and thirst of his soul. He has found the "pearl of great price."

The important point in these parables is that which is common to both — the incomparable value of the kingdom of God and the readiness with which one who perceives its value will give up all for it.

"For joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." "The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." There is a very wide-spread idea abroad that true religion is a joyless, sad state of heart and mind. Nothing can be farther from the truth. According to Scripture, true, living faith in Christ gives to the heart joys and pleasures which nothing else can give.

Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

The value of the treasure and the pearl of great price is so great that both of these men sell everything they have in order to get into possession of the newly found treasure. They go at once, sell irrevocably, purchase without delay.

Alas, how often, especially in our days, we see professing Christians acting quite differently! We see them hesitating to part with anything for the kingdom of God. Many young people postponing repentance and surrendering of heart till later on in life, when the pleasures of life begin to fade. How sad! How foolish! Can Satan and sin give greater joy and pleasure than Christ and His salvation? Let us examine ourselves in the light of these words of Christ.

Oh, that we may do this now, before the time comes of which the Savior tells us in the Parable of the Net, the time of the revelation and consummation of His kingdom!

2.

This Parable of the Net directs our thoughts to the end of time. "So shall it be at the end of the world." We are to consider what part the kingdom of heaven is to play *then,* when other kingdoms have played their parts, when things are being settled for eternity according to their value to God. Our Lord would have us consider the consummation of all things, when the great net shall at last be drawn to shore, when there shall be no more mingling of good and bad, but division and separation. "For we all must appear before . . . whether they be good or bad."

This parable has very much in common with that of the tares; though it is by no means merely another version of it.

The Lord compares His own work, that of His apostles and the ministers of His Word, — the preaching of the Gospel in this world among the nations of this earth, — to the casting of a great net and the drawing of it through the waters. He spoke to fishers, and he compared His work to theirs. While the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price shows us a man seeking the Kingdom, this parable presents to us the sight of the Kingdom seeking men.

The net represents the preaching of the Gospel, the missionary Church at work in carrying out the command of the Savior to preach the Gospel in all the world. We are not to wait till the world comes to Christ, but use all means of drawing men to Christ, by all means save some.

"Gathered of every kind." This goes on at all times. It was so in the days when Christ preached. Many came to Him and heard His words. Most of them fell away and left Him. Later on His disciples carried the message of Him far and wide. Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, yea, was heard of in the then-known world. Eusebius: "Like a sunbeam it streamed over the face of the earth." Missionaries by thousands are now bearing Christ's Gospel to all continents and the farthermost islands of the seas. And everywhere there are those that are drawn into the Gospel net, that enter into the Christian Church, at least outwardly. Several parables teach us that the Church here on earth is a mixed body, good and bad. Mere church connection is no more proof and guarantee of acceptance with Christ than presence in the net shows the goodness of the fish.

A day of sifting and sorting is coming. The net, when full, is drawn to the shore, and the fish are sorted. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Compare the guest at the king's supper having on no wedding-garment. A revealing day, a testing day, must come for us all.

The wicked will be severed from the just, will be separated by the angels, who are able to distinguish between the hypocrite and the true believer. As the tares are among the wheat in the field, so are the bad fish among the good in the net. As there, so we have here the terrible warning of Christ: "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire." If figures do not come up to the reality, the punishment of the sinner must be fearful in the extreme. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The agony of despair. The distress of impotent rage and resentment. This, after the burning, shows that the burning of the wicked is not their consumption. "Destruction" in Scripture is not "annihilation."

The time of the separation is when the net shall be "filled." The Gospel must first fulfil its commission in witnessing to all the world, as foretold by Christ, Matt. 24, 14.

What an incentive both to examine ourselves whether we have truly and sincerely received and accepted the Gospel by a living faith and to help in spreading its blessed message among the nations of this world! F. C. VERWIEBE.

CONFESSIONAL ADDRESSES.

Confessional Address on Ps. 23, 5.

From the story of our Savior's life we learn that He was beset with enemies: Pharisees, scribes, the traitor Judas, etc. We are not above the Master, Matt. 10, 24. We Christians also have our enemies. There are those who openly oppose us, and there are those who secretly plot our downfall. Some who wish to be optimists and trust all who approach them are deceived so often and so thoroughly that they finally become pessimists and can scarcely bring themselves to trust any one. It is just as sinful and foolish to believe every spirit and trust all men as it is to believe no one and to consider yourself the only honest man on earth. Elijah was assaulted by this temptation, 1 Kings 19, 10. The cure for this is to believe what our Lord has told us: John 16, 2; 1 John 3, 12. But our gracious Savior has done more than to warn us against our enemies. He has, as our text states, prepared a table before us against our enemies. We may very well apply these words also to the table of the Sacrament of the Altar, which is sometimes called the Lord's Table.

The Sacrament of the Altar a Table against Our Enemies.

1. A table against our own sin.

a) Against its accusations — forgiveness.

b) Against its temptations — strength.

2. A table against the world.

a) Against its threats it comforts us with the love, devotion, and protection of the Lord Jesus. He has so graciously cared for us by dying as our Shepherd for His sheep, and He still cares for us by coming to us to give us strength through His Sacrament.

b) Against the flattery, the allurements, and the enticements of the world; for in the Lord's Supper, God has invited us to be at the very banquet of the Lord Jesus and in company of His own disciples, in the very family of God, so that we may be fully assured that we do not need the friendship of the world.

3. A table against the devil.

a) Against the doubts and fears which he would inspire. 1) He cannot claim us as his own, for here we have the price of our redemption. 2) He cannot threaten us with his wrath, for the Good Shepherd protects us in this Sacrament.

b) Against his false promises and temptations. In the Sacrament of the Altar our Savior restores unto us the joy of our salvation and feeds us with the fatness of His house. Why should we leave the rich table of the Lord with its health-giving and satisfying Bread of Life in order to go to the beggarly elements, the garbage and trash which the devil has to offer? Is. 55, 1. 2.

What a rich provision God has given us in this table against our enemies! Let us use it gratefully and therefore also more frequently, so that we may be armored against the sin which doth so easily beset us.

S.

Confessional Address on Ps. 51, 10.

A Christian's life is a life of prayer. In the morning as he rises he gives thanks for God's protection during the night, and he prays for God's blessing for the day. He prays when he sits down to a meal. He prays at his work for God's help, and when the shades of night begin to sink, he again gives thanks for God's guidance and blessing and begs Him to be with him and protect him during the night. It is an ancient custom also to enter the house of God with prayer. At all times our prayers should be sincere and rise from our hearts. But our prayer should become more intense when we think of doing that which you are to do to-day — partake of the Lord's Supper. Then we are to cry earnestly to God to bless us. One prayer which we have been taught to use at that time is this: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Whoever prays that prayer with sincerity and truth is a worthy communicant, he is sure to receive God's rich blessing from this gracious table of the Lord. Let us therefore, etc.

The Communicant's Prayer:
"Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God."

It expresses —

1. *Humility and contrition because of sin.*
2. *Faith in the grace of God.*
3. *Love of purity and righteousness.*

1.

First, then, this prayer, "Create," etc., expresses humility and contrition. The communicant who prays it with all his heart thereby confesses that his heart is unclean and sinful. Nor is this a mere phrase, a mere use of words that we utter because we think they ought to be uttered, because they are fitting, because they are called for. Oh, no; it is because we deeply feel the depravity and sin of our hearts. A Christian knows what God requires of us, namely, that we love God above all things, that we ought to say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee," Ps. 73, 25. But if we earnestly examine ourselves, is that the constant cry of our heart? How ungrateful are we for God's blessings! How cold is our love toward Him!

Weak is the effort of my heart
And cold my warmest thought. (Hymn 96, 6.)

We scarcely dare to repeat or sing the hymn: "Jesus, I my cross have taken." (Hymn 335, 1. 3.)

Whereas the Word of God is so precious and glorious that the time spent in reading it, hearing it, considering it, ought to be the happiest moments of our lives, how often are we inattentive when it is read and proclaimed! Aye, we must reprove ourselves because we are conscious of a lack of love for God's Word; we need urging to go to God's house.

Again, instead of gratefully singing His praises from day to day, how often do we murmur, how often are we discontented with our lot and with God's guidance! Is it not true that, whereas the blessings of God are so great and glorious that we should contemplate them with wonder, gratitude, and desire, we often grow tired of hearing about them?

Nor can we say that our duties toward our fellow-men engage our time and thoughts fully. Oh, how much men speak of loving their neighbor as themselves, and how little of this love do we see among mankind! We must be continually upon our guard lest other men harm us, and we must watch over ourselves lest we harm others. Does such a condition testify to the love of man for man? Is it not true that men gladly hear evil of another? Is it not true that suspicion of another person's character enters our hearts but too easily? We believe evil because we ourselves are evil. We think evil because that is in harmony with our nature. Our selfish nature wishes evil. It is considered smart and shrewd to take advantage of another person, to outwit him in a trade, etc. And this sin has become so great and general that the other sin is added to it, namely, indifference to this sin and consequent lack of sorrow and contrition because of it. It is so easy to say, All men are sinners, we are imperfect, and to suppose that such phrases excuse living in sin and doing wrong.

Behold, then, my dear communicants, how impure is our heart, how sinful! And we are unable to improve it. We cannot make ourselves better than we are. When men have attempted that, they have simply become Pharisees, that is to say, they have become no better, but they have begun to think themselves better, which is still worse. Oh, let us therefore, if we abhor ourselves and come with humility to God, pray this prayer very earnestly: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." We certainly need it.

2.

And we pray thus because it expresses our faith that God will do what we ask. That is expressed in this very prayer. For why do we come here to this Sacrament? Why do we pray this prayer? Why do we confess our sins and ask God to absolve us, to forgive us? Because we believe that He is a gracious, merciful God and that He does forgive sins. We believe what David believed and confessed: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?

But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared," Ps. 130, 3. 4.

This Sacrament is not a ceremony which we believe will right us before God, some act of ours whereby we are to make up for our past sins and transgressions. No, this Sacrament proclaims to us the fact that God so loved the world, etc., John 3, 16. This Sacrament tells us that the body of Christ was given for us and that the blood of Christ was shed for us. Here in this Sacrament we are told that for those very sins of which I was speaking to you a moment ago and whereby we deserve God's wrath, temporal death, and eternal damnation, for those very sins Jesus suffered and died, for those sins He gave His body and His blood. Therefore we come to this Sacrament that we may be told this good news and hear this delightful message, reassuring, comforting, strengthening to our faith: Christ died for my sins; "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sins," 1 John 1, 7.

Let us be very careful. It is very easy to regard partaking of Holy Communion as a kind of duty that we must perform once or twice or three times a year, that we owe it to God, that it is a holy ceremony through which we make ourselves acceptable to God. All that is false; all such thoughts are wicked, are inspired by Satan. No, Holy Communion has been instituted by Christ that through it those who have faith in God may have that faith strengthened in the forgiveness of their sins, in the death of Christ, that they may receive power to say: Hymn 306, 1; 312, 1. We come here with our corrupt hearts that they may be washed. We come because we believe that we shall be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. That is the hunger and thirst which drives us and draws us to this Sacrament. That is what we express in the prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." He alone can do it. We are sure of that.

Therefore, however great your sins may be, whatever their nature may be, here in this Sacrament, God bestows upon you the body and blood of your Savior, which was paid as a ransom for your sins in order that you may be perfectly sure that God pardons, forgives, all *your* transgressions and accepts *you* again as His beloved child.

3.

But when we pray this prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God," we also ask God that He may actually remove the sin more and more from our hearts and give us godliness in its stead. Through this prayer we Christians show that we do not seek forgiveness only,— certainly, we want that, — but that we also seek true godliness. We want to do better. We are fighting against our own sins and transgressions. We wish to lead a godly life. We feel our own weakness. "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" Ps. 119, 5.

We cry to God for forgiveness, but our prayer is also that He would guard and keep us that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice, and though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and obtain the victory.

We Christians are Christian warriors, and one part of our warfare is to fight against our own sins. We recognize our evil inclinations, the evil lusts that so easily beset us. In fighting against them, we go to God for His help and for His assistance. Be sure that God is well pleased with such a prayer. He Himself has commanded us so to pray. Therefore He also grants us in this Sacrament this very help, strength, and assistance. Through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit works in our hearts purification, cleansing from sin, lust, and wickedness and works faith and devotion to duty and godliness.

Oh, let that, then, be our believing, earnest prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Help me to overcome my sin. Lord, bless this my participation in the Sacrament of my blessed Lord that I may return to my daily life stronger in my faith, more determined to resist and overcome the wickedness that still lives within my heart, so that I may gain the victory, endure unto the end, and finally come to rejoice with Him who gave Himself for me. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." S.

Confessional Address on Ps. 103, 5.

There is a twofold mystery in the Lord's Supper: first, the mystery of the presence of the body and blood of our Savior, and secondly, the mystery of its usefulness. In, with, and under the bread and wine in the Sacrament the body and blood of Jesus are taken with the mouth. No one has ever seen this, but we simply believe Jesus' word.

And through this institution, as a means of grace, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are offered, appropriated, and sealed unto us, and thus our faith is strengthened, and we also receive strength to lead an ever better Christian life. This second mystery is also invisible, of both of these mysteries it is true: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

Viewed thus, the Sacrament of the Altar is not an object of terror; the Lord's Table is not a table which we should approach with fear and trembling compelled to come by a stern command of God. It rather is like a marriage-feast to which we gladly and eagerly run; for then we are intimately united with the beloved Bridegroom of our soul and receive from Him heavenly gifts. This is indicated in our text. Let us, then, open our hearts to receive the truth the Holy Spirit here desires to convey.

Why Should We Gladly and Eagerly Go to the Lord's Table?

1.

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's," v. 5. Thus joyfully and triumphantly sings King David. He admonishes and exhorts his soul: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name . . . and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." David here recounts the benefits which bring such songs of praise to his lips. Indeed, he knows from bitter experience how weary, how depressed, how unhappy, sin renders man. David knew his sins; in his penitential psalms he tells of his tears and sighs; there he reveals how much he suffered under the burden of sin and from the terrible threats of the Law. But blessed be the Lord, who sent His prophet to the sinner with the message: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Now his mouth was free from sighings and songs of misery, but satisfied with good things and therefore filled with happy songs of praise. Now his weariness was gone; he felt his youth renewed like an eagle's. Thus this glorious song of praise was born; it is the triumphant shout of a pardoned soul.

Dear communicants, are we not likewise sinners? Every sincere Christian earnestly desires to walk the paths of righteousness, but he finds that he is far, far from being perfect. How often do we stumble and fall every day of the week! Anger overpowers us, evil lusts and passions pollute the heart, charity is lacking, we grow lukewarm, indifferent, of little faith, and ah, who can tell how often we fail! It proves the deep corruption of our nature. And true Christians feel this deeply; it wearies them, and they long for the assurance of grace and pardon.

Listen, then, ye that are weary and heavy laden, the Lord has commanded to preach forgiveness to such as you are. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." In the stead and by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ the called and ordained servant of the Word will tell you: Your sins are forgiven, you shall not perish, as Nathan said to David.

And by the word and command of Jesus you will receive His body and blood to assure you that the grace which that body and blood has procured and prepared is entirely yours, yours to enjoy forever. There is joy, there is happiness, for you who desire such grace. There your mouth will be satisfied with good things. The weight will be lifted from your soul, your youth will be restored. How gladly and eagerly therefore should we partake of this Holy Supper!

2.

But another viewpoint is to be considered. David sings: "so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Freed from the burden of his sins, David found new strength, he felt his youth restored in the service of his gracious Lord. He sings his song therefore also in view of the life he would lead as a child of God.

Whosoever has received this blessed assurance: God has for Jesus' sake forgiven all my sins, I am taken from prison and judgment, I am restored to the adoption of children, I say, whosoever has had that happy experience, such a one has a heart filled with deep thankfulness. He will look about and ever ask himself, How can I repay God's infinite love, the Savior's glorious goodness toward me? Oh, I will shun and avoid sin, which has caused my Lord Jesus such unspeakable suffering in body and soul. I will do the will of my Father in heaven.

But, alas! with great sadness of heart we must observe that sin is powerful within us, that in our miserable body reigns the law of sin, that it is a body of death, Rom. 7, 23. 24. Our weakness is so great, the sinful desires of our heart are so numerous and strong that our very best intentions often — O so often! — come to naught. Our Christian life is far from being perfect. And also this grievously depresses sincere Christians.

Listen, ye weary and heavy laden, all who heartily desire to crucify the flesh with its sinful desires, in this holy Sacrament the Lord Himself comes to you to give you strength. He says to you: "Open thou thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," Ps. 81, 10. He offers Himself to you, offers to be your Strength in your weakness. He will renew your youth, so that you may soar upwards like the eagle, so that with renewed eagerness and restored strength you will again battle against sin and all temptations and walk in the paths of holiness. This the Lord will surely do. How gladly and eagerly therefore will Christians go to the Lord's Table! Amen. H. J. Bouman.

Confessional Address on Ps. 119, 32.

In Christ Jesus Dearly Beloved Communicants: —

Job said: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble," Job 14, 1. The same truth is frequently stated in other parts of the Bible. In many places the Scriptures speak of man's suffering; they tell of the battles, disappointments, and trials of the godly and also narrate, and picture to us, the punishment and the despair of the wicked.

Thus beset behind and before and held in on every side with difficulties, men naturally look for some means of escape, for some support, and for some relief. And there is an abundance of all manner of help offered them; but most of what is offered is merely fraudulent bait. When Jesus suffered hunger in the wilderness, the devil at once offered Him bread, but our Savior recognized the Tempter. We must likewise be upon our guard lest we be deceived by false consolation, false hope, and fraudulent offers of support and assistance in the midst of the sorrow of this life. Indeed, there is only one true comfort against the ills that beset us. That consolation offers true relief and will never disappoint us. It is to be found in the Word of God and therefore also in that very Sacrament which you wish to receive, and it is mentioned in the words of our text.

The Consolation and Strength which the Sacrament of the Altar Bestows.

1. The consolation which it bestows.

a) It removes the anxiety concerning our sin. In our text it is called "enlarging the heart." This means to relieve the pressure of guilt that would distress us because of our transgressions.

We are sinners, and even though we are Christians and love the Lord and fight against our sins, self-examination will show us that we have not been sinless. "Not as though I had already attained," Phil. 3, 12. 13. And if we consider the threats of God, consider the judgments of God upon other sinners (God's chastisement of Moses, of David, of the children of Israel) and realize that the wages of sin is death, anxiety and depression take hold of us. Indeed, just those people who struggle against their sins, but realize their weakness, grow most distressed and cry with St. Paul: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

b) For such an oppressed, contrite, and distressed heart there is but one remedy. God must enlarge it, and He does it through this very Sacrament. For what does He do in the Lord's Supper? He tells us of the sacrifice which Jesus made for our sins. In this Sacrament He takes each of us, as it were, by the hand and says to each communicant: "My son, My daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. Jesus' body was given for you, Jesus' blood was shed for you. That was the sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

And in order to make us very sure, He gives us the very body that was sacrificed for us and the very blood that was shed for us. If God did not intend that we should have the benefits of Christ's suffering and death, He would not permit us to receive Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament.

O blessed are you therefore that are coming here hungering and thirsting after forgiveness, righteousness, before God; for ye shall be filled. You are receiving that enlargement of the heart for which you sigh. You were filled with anxiety, your heart was oppressed because of your guilt, and here each of you is told, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Oh, how foolish they are who deny themselves this relief of their guilty conscience! How sinful to remain away from the Sacrament of the Altar! Let us be frequent participants here at God's Table. Let us take the riches which God so graciously offers; then our hearts will be enlarged, we shall go our way rejoicing.

Does the thought of your unworthiness trouble you? They are worthy and well prepared who have faith in these words, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Unbelief, doubt, alone can exclude you from the benefits of this blessed Sacrament. Whoever you may be, God invites you: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This in itself should be sufficient to draw all men to the Sacrament of the Altar. But God offers even more.

2. The strength which it bestows.

Our text mentions the fact that such comfort and consolation bestows upon us also the strength to "run the way of God's commandments," that is, to lead a life of godliness. That is the strength which this Sacrament bestows upon Christian communicants.

a) The false comfort that some accept for their sin, such as excusing themselves by saying that all men are sinners or that they are no worse than others, or thinking to remedy all things by promising to do better or by simply denying their guilt, are just so many deceptions, which lead deeper and deeper into sin and its slavery.

b) There is only one consolation, one enlargement of the heart, which at the same time also bestows new strength to lead a godly life, that is, the comfort and consolation which is offered to us in the Sacrament. Its logic is expressed by Paul: "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves," etc., 2 Cor. 5, 15.

Why is this?

First, because the love of the Savior kindles our love, 1 John 4, 19.

Secondly, because by this consolation of Christ's death the Holy Spirit enters the heart and continues His work of taking away our waywardness and love of sin and gives us instead the love of God's ways and the strength to resist evil and to live according to God's commandments.

Do we not need this help of the Sacrament? Indeed, if it is properly and frequently used, God will deliver us more and more from the sin which doth so easily beset us, indeed, from all the ills of life, and will finally give us perfect freedom from all evil in heaven. S.

Confessional Address on Luke 5, 31. 32.

In the fifth chapter of Luke we are told that upon one occasion, Jesus was invited by Levi, a publican. This Levi had prepared a feast in honor of Jesus and had invited a great company of publicans to be there also. These publicans were disreputable people, and most of them deserved their reputation. When the scribes and Pharisees, who belonged to what was considered the better class of people in those days, saw this company of sinners about Jesus, they murmured. They declared that a man who claimed to stand for the moral uplift of the people should not associate with publicans and sinners. They therefore asked the disciples of Jesus, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? Upon hearing such murmuring and incrimination, Jesus said: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." In these words, Jesus did not only justify Himself and give a specific answer to these proud Pharisees, but He also expressed a general truth concerning His person and religion. Indeed, He positively stated His purpose in coming into this world. And this answer of Jesus is of the utmost importance for you, my dear communicants, just at this time, for in these words Jesus tells us for whom He came, for whom He does all that He does, for whom He gives all that He gives, and therefore He tells us also —

For Whom Jesus has Provided This Sacrament of the Altar,

namely,

1. *Not for those who are righteous and whole;*
2. *But for those who are sinful and sick.*

1.

Jesus is the Author, the Institutor, of this Sacrament; He has given it to us. Through it He wishes to deal with us. By partaking of it, we come to Jesus. Through this Sacrament, Jesus practises His art of healing. Through it He wishes to help us and to bless us. But now He expressly states that He has not come for the righteous, that is, for good people, who are without sin. We who know something of the teaching of God's holy Word will say at once, There are no perfectly righteous persons. All men are sinners. True, but these scribes and Pharisees considered themselves better than the publicans and sinners who had gathered around the Lord Jesus. And it is true, before men they had a better reputation. But Jesus did not come for the sake of giving us a reputation. And before God all men are equally sinners, even as Scripture teaches: "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The difference between one sinner and another sinner is mostly outward. Before God and in our spirit we are all corrupt. That was the error of these Pharisees: they considered themselves good before God and thought that Jesus ought therefore to associate with them and reject other sinners. They thought that by their outward righteousness and observances they could gain the favor of God. In other words, their mistake was that very popular mistake in religion which seems to satisfy so many people to-day; they said: Do right, do the best you can, and you will please God and need fear nothing. But such advice is just as good and sensible as if you would say to a sick man who in the depth of winter is lying in bed, suffering with pneumonia: "Why, my good man, that is no way to live; you ought to be outside snowballing with the boys. That is healthful." That may be good advice for a healthy man, but not for one who is sick. It is just so with us spiritually sick. Why tell us no more than that God demands goodness? We know that; but we are not good, we have no righteousness and goodness of our own.

This truth has its importance for you right now when you wish to attend the Lord's Supper. There are only too many who think that the Lord's Supper is a pious practise which ought to be kept up. By going to the Lord's Supper, they think they do God's will, that it is one thing which God has demanded, a part of God's will that must be observed, and they think if they go to the Lord's Supper once or perhaps twice a year, they are doing their duty towards God, towards man, and towards the church. Others may think that, since they have sinned and done some wrong things, going to the Lord's Supper will make up for their sins, that it is a kind of good work which will take the place of other virtues which they lack. By going to the Lord's Supper, they wish to go about to establish their own righteousness. They think that that is possible, that through their life and through their actions in one way or the other, either by doing right or by doing something to make up for their transgressions, they can produce a righteousness that will satisfy God. But to all these persons Christ here says that He has not come for the righteous, just as the physician is not for those that are whole. The Lord's Supper is not for persons who can help themselves.

Does the Lord Jesus say this because these people were actually righteous? Not at all; but He wished to correct their sinful self-righteousness and pride. Just so we, when hearing this truth, that we cannot complete our righteousness by going to the Lord's Supper, should not say, "Then I need not go to the Sacrament at all." But we are to be impressed with the fact that we are not righteous and that it is impossible for us to help ourselves. We are sinners, and we can do nothing to make up for our sins. No matter how often you go to the Sacrament; you cannot thereby make up for the smallest sin. Attendance at the Lord's Supper will not take the place of obedience to the Law of God. O let none therefore come to this Sacrament to-day with this idea, that he is doing something that supplies one part of the righteousness which he owes to God or that he is doing something whereby he is supplying a substitute for his virtues. All those persons who think that they are righteous or that they can help themselves from their sin, that they can do something, whatever it may be, even though it be attendance at the Lord's Supper, whereby they can make up for their past transgressions, — all these persons are not prepared to receive the Sacrament. They who receive it in that frame of mind and with that intention will receive condemnation, damnation, to themselves. No, the purpose of the Lord's Supper is entirely different. What is it?

2.

Jesus tells us that when He declares that He came *to call sinners to repentance.*

By this Sacrament you are to be impressed with the fact that you are sinful and guilty before God. Are you not told here that the body of Christ was given and His blood shed for your sins? Here Christ's crucifixion and death are preached to you, and such preaching declares to you the wrath of God over sin. Think of Christ's suffering. If He had to suffer all that for the sins of others, what will happen to that hateful sinner who must suffer for his own sin? Luke 23, 31.

You are not to deny your guilt, nor are you to try to make up for it, but you are to repent of your sins. That is why Jesus gave you this Sacrament, that you might come here as repentant sinners.

And what does that mean, to be a repentant sinner? It means that you see your lost, sinful condition and come here to this Jesus, who gave His body for you and shed His blood for you. Here you are to pray: Ps. 51, 1—3 and Luke 18, 13.

To be truly repentant means that you come to this Fountain to be washed in the blood of Christ. Zech. 13, 1; 1 John 1, 7.

Here you are to confess your guilt and accept complete pardon from your merciful God. That is the purpose for which this Sacrament was given to us.

If that is your prayer: "Wash me," etc., then be sure you are a welcome guest here, and God will abundantly pardon, Is. 1, 18.

And with such pardon the Holy Spirit will also restore to you the joy of God's salvation, so that you will receive strength to amend your sinful life.

Rejoice, therefore, my dear communicant, in the very precious gift which you are to receive here and, going on your way rejoicing, live unto Him who died for you and rose again, 2 Cor. 5, 15. S.

Confessional Address on Luke 22, 19. 20.

You have come to the house of God to receive the Lord's Supper, the most unique meal on earth, a Sacrament which has been celebrated by Christians for more than nineteen hundred years.

When our Lord knew that the hour of His vicarious death was at hand, that He would soon withdraw His visible presence from His disciples, He instituted this Sacrament as a last will and testament for their souls' welfare, for the strengthening and preserving of their faith.

Let us briefly meditate upon —

The Last Will and Testament of Our Lord.

1. The Testator.

We see before us the establishment of the most unique testament in all history. Men have made their testaments at all times, before and after Christ. Here, however, we have no mere man, no apostle, no angel, but the Lord of heaven and earth, the true, all-wise, all-powerful Son of God Himself, the God-man, our blessed Savior, as the Testator. He was about to bring His supreme sacrifice of love for the sins of the world, John 3, 16; 15, 12. 13. Our Lord speaks to us here in this testament!

Men are weak and frail. During life they are able to do only certain things; after death they are powerless. They may make careful stipulations in their last wills, but they cannot see to it that these are actuallly carried out afterwards. Here we have the last will of Him who said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" and who promised His followers: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." What He has stipulated in His testament He will also do.

2. The testament.

Men in their testaments bequeath their wealth, money, jewels, real estate, home, stocks, bonds, and the like. There is nothing of the kind mentioned in this will. The Testator, though He was the Son of God, had none of these in His state of humiliation. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He became poor that we might be made rich. Though He left us riches in His last will, they are not what men ordinarily classify as such. Nevertheless they are the most precious possession ever bequeathed in a testament here on earth, the most valuable treasures the Son of God had to bestow, namely, His true body and blood, and through them the forgiveness of sins. In His testament He dispenses the very things which He came into the world to give, in the simple words: "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins."

3. The heirs.

Men usually choose the members of their family as their heirs. Sometimes wealthy men include their church, their city, some charitable institution, in their will; others endow hospitals in order that these may indefinitely minister to the poor, still others establish research institutions for the study and cure of diseases, so that all mankind may be benefited thereby.

Here we have a testament that offers benefits, not to a few, but to the world; not for an age, but until the end of time; not merely for temporal or physical wants, but for the welfare of man's immortal soul.

'Tis true that the actual heirs of this testament are only those who repent of their sins and by faith become the disciples of Christ, but there is no limit set to the number of these. All men are invited in the Gospel: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It therefore follows that those who do not come to Christ by faith exclude themselves from the inheritance which is offered to them in this testament. Now let us briefly consider

4. The inheritance.

Luther says: "This is shown us by these words: 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins,' namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

Was ever an inheritance greater than this? Wealthy men have died in despair who would willingly have given all their wealth for this inheritance, but it was too late. Yet here it is offered to you and to me freely, without money and without price, Is. 55, 1 ff. All that is necessary to receive it is true repentance, *i. e.*, godly sorrow on account of our sins and childlike faith in Christ, our Savior, Acts 2, 38 ff.

Surely we ought to consider ourselves fortunate and rejoice in our inheritance. Our Sacrament ought to be a true Eucharist, a feast of thanksgiving for all that Christ has done for us.

And yet many Christians are negligent and careless. They come but seldom to partake of it. Some give as their excuse that they feel themselves unworthy, as though only perfect, sinless, ones were privileged to use it. If that were so, none would dare approach this table, for we are all sinners. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

No, he is worthy who believes in Christ and hungers and thirsts after righteousness. If we are physically weak, we take food or medicine to restore our bodies. If we are spiritually frail and weak, as we all are at times, we have here the food and the medicine for our souls. If your love is growing cold; if your hope is not as fervent as it might be; if you are impatient under the cross; if you would become a better, stronger, more faithful Christian, come to the Lord's Supper. It is the bruised reed, the smoking flax, he who is weak in faith, that is most in need of this Sacrament.

So, then, dear friends, come to partake of the Sacrament; come and eat and drink for the salvation of your souls; come and receive new hope, new life, new vigor, new courage, new zeal, new assurance, of the grace of God, new certainty that you are an heir of heaven.

> Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
> Come to the Mercy-seat, fervently kneel.
> Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
> Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

W. G. POLACK.

Confessional Address on Heb. 13, 9.

Why do we Christians go to the Lord's Table? That we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins, but only Christ, true God and man, and that He really did render such satisfaction for our sins; furthermore, that we learn to look with horror at our sins and to regard them as great indeed and therefore avoid them and grow in true obedience to our beloved Redeemer, in whom alone we have found, and continue to find, joy and comfort in life and death. In short, we desire what our text calls a heart established with grace. May our gracious Lord to this end bless our meditation and our partaking of the holy Sacrament!

The Good Thing — A Heart Established with Grace.

1. What that means; *2. How it is obtained.*

1.

"It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." What does that mean, a heart established? The holy writer tells us; he writes: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." We should not be swayed hither and thither like a reed that is blown to and fro by every wind; we must not accept now this, now that doctrine.

But this happens very frequently. There arises a man with a new doctrine. He is perhaps a great orator, knows how to fascinate his listeners, and, behold, he soon has a great following. Be the doctrines ever so strange, altogether at variance with the teachings of

Holy Writ, he nevertheless gathers disciples about him. They desert the truth and accept error. And soon after probably another man comes forth with doctrines still stranger, and then they run after him. Thus they are carried about by divers and strange doctrines. Their heart is not established, is not anchored in Holy Scriptures. Therefore it is certainly a good thing that the heart be established, firmly anchored to the truth.

This also applies to our faith and life. There, again, we notice much swaying and uncertainty. At times a Christian will make a strong effort in faith and life, and then again he will lie prostrate. To-day we may be joyful, happy, in our faith, certain of God's grace, glad to suffer, yea, to die for our faith; to-morrow we may be men of little faith, very much dismayed, woefully complaining, exceedingly anxious and restless. Now we hold fast to God's gracious promises, with firm assurance saying with Paul: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth"; and then again our soul seems devoid of all comfort, we dare not lay hold of God's sure promises. Thus we are swaying to and fro.

Therefore it is certainly a good thing that the heart be established. Who would not desire a heart so established that at all times and under all circumstances he could be assured of the grace of the Lord and that even in the valley of the shadow of death he could confidently sing: "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Ps. 23, 4), or, "I am persuaded that neither death," etc. (Rom. 8, 38. 39)?

It is similar with our life. We have the best intentions, we resolve to sin no more, to give way no more to the desires of our flesh, but to follow in the footsteps of our Lord. Soon, however, these good intentions and resolutions are forgotten; we permit ourselves to be carried headlong into sinful acts and deeds. We all know that this is true. Our steps in Christian life are very uncertain; they are like the steps of a little child making its first attempts to walk. We often stumble and fall.

There, again, you see what a good thing it is that the heart be established, that the uncertain attempts at walking become firm and steady steps. Would it not be fine if we could control our evil desires and thoughts, control ourselves, so that every evil word which would rise to our lips will remain unspoken and every evil deed remain undone; if we could firmly and steadily refuse to walk evil ways and always do what is right? Every genuine Christian will heartily long for such a heart, a heart firmly established.

2.

Let me tell you how such a heart is obtained. The holy writer says that it is "established with grace." You cannot obtain an established, a firm, heart by your own reason and strength. Many have tried it and have failed.

The established heart is divinely given, given by grace. The grace of God as proclaimed in the Gospel and brought to us by the Gospel makes a firm heart. It is the Holy Spirit who by the Gospel gives us the assurance that our sins are forgiven and that we are heirs of eternal life, that the fruits of Christ's vicarious suffering and death are our very own, for us to enjoy to the fullest extent.

And the Sacrament of the Altar is Gospel also and therefore the workshop of the Holy Ghost, the means of grace through which He is operative. The eating and drinking of the body and blood of the Savior puts the seal on the gracious promises of God and establishes the heart therein. Our faith is strengthened through the Holy Supper and enabled to withstand ever greater onslaughts of temptation.

And where the heart is thus established with grace, there is also firmness in life. Faith and piety are joined together as cause and effect. Cf. The penitent malefactor.

Let us come therefore to the table of our Lord and receive "the good thing," a "heart established with grace." We pray for grace; why not come, then, to that place where the Lord bestows it? Amen.

H. J. BOUMAN.

MID-WEEK SERVICES.

First Advent Outline.

Gen. 49, 8—12.

Our text is a part of the prophecy spoken by Jacob just before his departure from this vale of tears. According to his own statement to Pharaoh this patriarch's life consisted of few and evil days and had not attained unto the days of the years of the life of his fathers. Born a twin, he grew up to be hated of his twin brother Esau. This Esau threatened his life. He had to flee from his own home. Serving his uncle Laban faithfully, he was deceived again and again. Ten times Laban changed his wages. Finally he had to flee from Laban also. On the way back he had to meet his enraged brother Esau. — That night at Penuel. — The bitter experiences with his sons. — The fearful blow when told that his son Joseph's coat of many colors had been found bloody and dusty, so that he cried out: "An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces," Gen. 37, 33. Still later, in utmost agony of heart, he had to see his youngest son Benjamin depart for Egypt. But finally God granted him a sight of his son Joseph, ruler over all Egypt. He went down to see him, fell about his neck, kissed and embraced him, saying: "I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed," Gen. 48, 11. — And now came the time for this life of a little while of sorrow and a little while of joy to draw to a close. Once more the Spirit of God came upon him. He called his sons about his bed and said: "Gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, ye sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel, your father," Gen. 49, 1. 2. To each one of his sons he gave a word of wisdom and a word of prophecy, and inspired by the Spirit of God, he pointed to that one son from whom would be descended the most powerful Prince of all Israel and, in fact, of the entire world. It was Judah. Judah's Descendant he pictures as a lion, and because of this prophecy the New Testament (Rev. 5, 5) speaks of this Prince as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." The meaning of this name is to engage our attention as we prepare to celebrate His birth to whom God gave it; for the fulfilment of the prophecy has revealed to us the wonderful content of this title of distinction: —

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

It tells —

1. Of the Messiah's majesty; 2. Of His heroism; 3. Of His victory.

1.

a) Just as men use less complimentary similes for some men and women to indicate their estimate of them, so they have always pictured a man of *majestic* qualities as a lion. It is with this purpose of exaltation that Jacob uses the term lion here in our text. He is prophesying of Judah that from this tribe a Son shall be born through whom all his sons and all his descendants shall come to glory, honor, and riches.

In dwelling upon the future of his descendants, Jacob saw much contention, sin, strife, crime, persecution, suffering, and iniquity. In Reuben he saw instability, lack of perseverance, a zigzag career, once trying this and then trying that; of him he therefore said: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." In Simeon and Levi he saw cruelty and wickedness, and he foretold that they would be scattered abroad. He called Issachar an ass bearing burdens; Dan he called a serpent, Benjamin a wolf. Of Joseph he spoke better things, for he compared him to a fruitful bough. But when he came to Judah, his heart leaped for joy. Judah he called a lion, not because of what Judah himself would do, but because of what Judah's great Descendant should accomplish. The nobility and majesty was not in Judah, for Judah was born of a wife who had been forced upon her husband. But God, by His Holy Spirit, revealed to Jacob that from Judah there should come a Son to whom all his father's children should bow down. And not only the descendants of Jacob, but all people who would gather about Him. A Man whose eyes should be red as with wine and His teeth white as with milk. There was to be in this Descendant the utmost abundant life, always at its best. He was to be absolutely free from any blemish. In Him was to be such life, life in such fulness, that of His fulness all men might receive grace for grace, John 1, 4. 16. And withal, there was to be wondrous, pure, snow-white innocency. In short, He was to be a Man above all other men. He was to have a name above every name. He was to be that man in whom dwelt Divinity itself, the fulness of the Godhead, bodily.

b) Have these words been fulfilled, or were they merely an idle dream? Is this the feverish vision of a sick old man, or is there truth in what this dying patriarch is saying?

The Jews can make nothing of it. Nearly four thousand years ago these words were spoken. But the Jews say that they can tell us of no one of the tribe of Judah who could be considered as fulfilling this promise. It is true, there was David, and there was Solomon, but neither David nor Solomon are pictured here. They do not measure up to this Lion of Judah, who is portrayed in these words of the patriarch. David certainly was not a Shiloh, a Prince of peace, a peaceable Ruler; for of David we are told that God would not allow him to build the Temple because he had shed so much blood and made such great wars, 1 Chron. 22, 8. And Solomon was certainly not a lion who took his prey and whose hand was in the neck of his enemies. David and Solomon were both in one or more respects *types* of this Lion of Judah, but they each were *types only*, nothing more. If we eliminate these two, there is not a single one of the descendants of Judah who could even serve as a type of the Lion, much less the Lion Himself. To-day the scepter has long since departed from Judah and a lawgiver from between his feet. Therefore it is idle to expect a future fulfilment of this prophecy.

And why expect a future fulfilment of this prophecy when we know that it has been fulfilled, namely, in *Jesus of Nazareth,* the Son of David of the tribe of Judah? Either this Old Testament with all its prophecies is merely an antiquated book of foolish fables, mixed with some historical truth, or this prophecy speaks of that one Descendant of David who alone, because of the majesty of His person, is worthy to be called the Lion of Judah. Jesus' name is above every other name, Acts 4, 12.

True, men wish to detract from the majesty of this Jesus. They wish to make of Him a mere man, who taught men to love their neighbors. But God calls these detractors liars, 1 John 2, 22. The majesty of Jesus is the highest majesty, it is the majesty of God. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

No one understands or believes the Old Testament unless he sees in it Jesus, that man of divine majesty of the tribe of Judah who is our Immanuel, that is, God with us, God manifest in the flesh. That is the majesty of Jesus, that in Him Divinity assumed the human nature. "The Word was made flesh"; the Creator assumed the nature and form of His chief visible creature. The fact remains and cannot be disputed that no son of David has been given such testimony of majesty by God Himself, by the prophets (Acts 10, 43), and by millions and millions of devoted believers as Jesus of Nazareth. The Father repeatedly spoke of Him, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Of Him John the Baptist, the greatest of those who have been born of women, said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Of Him John declared: "This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John 5, 20. Of Him Peter, himself of Israel, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, declares: "Let all the house of Israel," etc., Acts 2, 36. Of Him this same Peter said: "Neither is there salvation in any other," Acts 4, 12. His majesty consists in this, that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He is God manifest in the flesh. We are not idolaters when we worship this Man Jesus; for He is the Master, He is the Lion, He is the Lord, He is the Christ, He is our God. Indeed, the patriarch speaks of this praise that is going to be given to Shiloh when he says: "Thou art He whom thy brethren shall praise." We do right in singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and in preparing to celebrate His birthday as we celebrate the birthday of no other one of the human race.

2.

a) However, the image of a lion is used here not only to indicate the majesty of this Prince, but also His valor and heroism. That virtue is spoken of in our text when Jacob declares: "Judah is a lion's whelp," v. 9. A Hero is to come of the tribe of Judah, who is to fear no foe. He is to be perfectly fearless. He is to face any and all foes. He is to fight the battles of His people. He is to be their fearless Champion, who defends them day and night.

b) This, again, is true of no one but Jesus. David was a comparatively fearless man; but, after all, he was so frightened at one time when among the Philistines that he acted as an insane man and played the part of a demented maniac in order that his life might be spared, 1 Sam. 21, 12. Later on he feared Joab and told Solomon to punish Joab because he himself did not dare to do it, 1 Kings 2, 5. The fearless Champion of the tribe of Judah is Jesus. Fearlessness was in Him from His youth. It was in His nature.

It was not the fearlessness born of ignorance. Many a mother's son has gone out and joined the army because he knew nothing of war. Jesus knew what was in man, John 2, 25. He knew that men were liars and murderers. Jesus had been warned against Herod, and He had been warned against the Pharisees and scribes. But He walked freely among these men. In the night in which He was betrayed He asked the mob that came to take Him, "Whom seek ye?" and when they told Him, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth," He told them: "I am He; . . . let these go their way," John 18, 8.

Indeed, Jesus was not afraid of the devil. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of that evil spirit. Out there He was alone with Satan, who tempted Him and assaulted Him for forty days and forty nights, and fasted during all that time. The devil is sometimes compared to a roaring lion, but this Lion of the tribe of Judah was a match for him.

Jesus was not afraid of Pontius Pilate, whom even the scribes and Pharisees feared. He told Pilate: "Thou wouldest have no power at all unless it were given thee from above." How fearlessly He went up to Jerusalem in order to suffer and die! Luke 18, 32.

c) What was it that gave Him courage? It was His devotion to us. He had compassion with His brethren, the poor sinners doomed to death. He would not see them perish. He came to defend them, to fight for them, to deliver them, to save them. He devoted all to us and sacrificed all for us. Nothing appalled this Lion; nothing could frighten Him when our welfare was at stake, John 10, 11; 13, 1b; Gal. 2, 20b ("who loved me and gave Himself for me"); 1 Tim. 2, 6; Rom. 5, 6—8. Should we not rejoice in such a Champion? Have we not cause to celebrate His birthday with joy of heart?

3.

a) Finally, Jacob gave the name of *Lion of the tribe of Judah* to his great Descendant to picture Him as a triumphant Hero and victorious King.

This Lion was not to fight and to sacrifice Himself in vain. Oh, no! He was to gain and maintain the freedom and safety of His people. Therefore He is also called the *Shiloh,* the Prince of Peace. 'Tis true, He was to fight, but He was to fight to win and to preserve peace. This Lion of Judah was to gain an eternal empire for Himself and for His own, and over it He was to stand guard, to protect it against every foe, and over it He was to rule in peace.

b) This description, this picture, represents, and can represent, one Person only. Of all men He is the only One who is recognized as the original, as the living Person who is portrayed — it is Jesus of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, the great Prince of Peace, who through His battles, sufferings, labors, and victories has gained peace, eternal peace, for His people.

Not an external, temporary peace, not a miserable armistice of a few years while hatred burns on, but an eternal peace; peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins, Eph. 2, 14—16; Rom. 5, 1; Matt. 1, 21; John 20, 19—23.

And in this kingdom of Shiloh, the Lion of Judah, there is peace among all members; for all pray with sincerity: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Indeed, these people are all peacemakers, Matt. 5, 9. They carry peace out into all the world. Their message to all men is a message of peace, Matt. 28, 19; John 20, 21—23; 2 Cor. 5, 19. 20.

This Lion of Judah is pictured as one who "divideth the spoil," Is. 53, 12. Through Jesus' suffering and death unlimited treasures have been gained, and these are now bestowed upon all who will accept them. The Lion of Judah calls all to the prey and invites all to participate in the spoil, Matt. 11, 28; 22, 4; John 4, 10. 14.

Pardon, peace, protection, power, safety, guidance, support, light, in short, all that we need for time and for eternity, we are daily receiving from that mighty Conqueror of Satan, sin, and hell. Righteousness, peace, joy, more than our heart can hold, He offers us. We are filled and satisfied with the spiritual treasures and with the hope of that eternal inheritance which is promised us. If any one remains poor, it is his own fault, Is. 55, 1. 2; Rev. 22, 1. 2.

What a beautiful vision this text opens to the eyes of our faith! How terrible this Lion is to our foes, and how delightful this Shield is to us, who believe in Him and love Him! Who is not ravished with the sight of this majestic, this heroic, this victorious Lion of Judah, this Shiloh whose eyes are red with wine, who bestows life and always life and ever life more abundant upon us! No wonder we and our children are preparing to celebrate His coming into our flesh. Hymn 139. S.

Second Advent Outline.

Num. 24, 17.

These words were uttered amid very strange circumstances. The children of Israel lay encamped down in the Plains of Moab. For forty years they had been wandering in the wilderness. For forty years they had struggled on against hunger and thirst, against foes from without, and against sin and rebellion from within. Many of their number had fallen in the desert, but the people as a whole had remained victorious. Out of every conflict they had come forth as conquerors. No foe could stand before them. Even now the kings Og and Sihon had been vanquished. The story of their successes had come to the ears of those kings who were still to be conquered and filled them with fear and dismay. One of these, the next one to be met, was Balak, the king of Moab. This man despaired of effectively opposing Israel. He therefore sent to a notorious wizard, or sorcerer, by the name of Balaam. With flattery and presents he won him to come down and see if he could curse this people whom God had blessed. Balaam was informed of God that he was not to curse this people; but the bribe of gold proved too attractive to this old lying, false prophet. He came down to see what might be done. But he soon found that it is vain to fight against God. God had blessed Israel, and no one could curse it. Instead of the curse which this false man wanted to pronounce, God forced him to utter one of the most impressive prophecies which may be found in the Bible. In this prophecy He is mentioned as our Messiah whose advent and coming into the flesh we are celebrating. Of Him God proclaims glorious things in this text. These we shall now consider as He is pictured as

The Star of Jacob.

1. Who is this Star of Jacob?

In our text, Balaam is speaking of the future: "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh. There shall come *a Star out of Jacob.*" It is not difficult to see that these words refer to a person. It is a figure of speech used in all languages to call a leading, prominent person a *star*. In this case the person spoken of is the future greatest Son of Israel, the mighty Ruler before whom none can stand. Who is that? Some would tell us that Balaam was referring to David. And it is true, David was a powerful ruler; but, after all, he ruled only a small kingdom of few people. David is not the greatest king of Israel. And this Star refers to the greatest and the mightiest who should come forth from this people Israel, and that is none other than Jesus, the Son of Mary, that Star which outshines in glory not only all the sons of Jacob, but all the sons of men. The Star of Jacob is the Sun of mankind, exceeding in brilliancy all others. It is that Descendant of Jacob who is both God and man in one Person.

Even when clouded by His humiliation, this Sun of Righteousness shed rays of light that made the witnesses of His deeds and the hearers of His words say: "Truly, this was the Son of God," Matt. 27, 54. Those who were privileged to walk with Him said: John 1, 14. Those who heard Him speak, said: John 7, 46. Even His most bitter enemies had to confess: John 11, 47. To-day all His faithful subjects give to this Star the same honor which they give to the Creator of heaven and earth, John 5, 23. That is the only Man who could speak those words which none dare speak in truth but God only, Matt. 28, 18—20; John 8, 58; 12, 48; 14, 9.

No other star, no other man, dare claim the honor and glory which we give to this *Star of Jacob.*

Have you recognized and acknowledged the supremacy of this Star of Jacob?

2. What blessings does its light bestow?

We are not to imagine that this Star has appeared simply that it may be admired and wondered at. Of all men this One who is called the Star of Jacob is to be of real and most valuable service to men, Matt. 20, 28.

a) This Star cheers our night of sin by bringing forgiveness and God's grace, John 3, 16; 1, 9.

b) In the night of confusion, perplexity, many false ways and deceptions, here is the Light of the world, John 8, 12. 31. 32.

c) In the night of sorrow this Star shines in God's Word to bid us, "Weep not," Luke 7, 13. He calls to all the burdened children of men: Matt. 11, 28. — No night of misfortune so dark, this Star promises deliverance and thus spreads cheer and hope.

d) In the valley of the shadow of death this Star rises for the Christian, Ps. 23, 4; John 11, 25. 26. Hymn 103, 1.

3. For whom is this Star shining?

a) Balaam declares that this Star is to be the *Scepter of Israel.* This future King shall be the glory of God's people Israel, Luke 2, 32. Through this one Child of the Hebrews that people has been honored above all people. He was sent to save Israel. And He did save that people from their sins. What of it if some did not accept Him? He is nevertheless *the King of Israel.*

b) But this Star shines also for the Gentiles, Is. 60, 3. The Kenites rejoiced in this Star and accepted the invitation to travel by its light, Num. 10, 29. Rahab, the woman of Canaan, Ruth of the Moabites, the Gibeonites, and many other Gentiles rejoiced in this Star. When that Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings, Mal. 4, 2, then at once His star appeared to those Eastern sages, and they came to Judea to worship this Star of Jacob. And since then, especially through the great apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, great multitudes of those who were aliens from the covenant of Israel have found peace, pardon, and salvation in this Star.

True it is, this Star means destruction to all who oppose Him or His rule, even as our text foretells. But why oppose Him who brings all blessings to all men? God preserve us from such folly and wickedness! Let us rejoice in the saving light of our Star: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Soon the lights shall shine from our Christmas-trees to tell of this Star. May His light illumine all our hearts so that with hearts and lips we may sing: Hymn 46, 3!

S.

Third Advent Outline.

Is. 11, 1—10.

The prophet Isaiah, from whose matchless writings our text is taken, has been called the Evangelist of the Old Testament. This distinction was given him because he, above all other writers of the Hebrew Scriptures, tells the story of the Messiah. Isaiah indeed also reproved sin and denounced God's judgment upon transgression (1, 2—6; 3, 1—9, etc.), but none exceeded him in fervor or beauty of expression when he spoke of the One to be born of a virgin, our Immanuel, the Child that was to be, and was to be called, the "Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." When he told of the Light that was to shine in darkness, of the Servant of the Lord upon whom God had put His Spirit, who was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; when he proclaimed the coming of that King of His people against whom no weapon should prosper, — then his tongue became the pen of a ready writer, then all of us perceive that the seraphim have touched his lips with a live coal from the altar of God. So varied and forceful is the imagery which he uses that his writings are a veritable storehouse from which all preachers of Christ enrich their message.

And each of his pictures has its own peculiar force and purpose to clarify our vision of the Messiah and endear Him to our hearts. Thus in our text Isaiah speaks of

The Branch of Jesse.

1. Who is this Branch of Jesse? *2. Where is His realm?*

1.

a) By this figure of speech he wishes to point to the fulfilment of the promises made to David, the Son of Jesse. That house and family had degenerated and sunken into ruin. What glory had been that of David! What splendor and renown that of Solomon! 1 Kings 10, 1—13. 27. But what disintegration since then, what miserable, shameful rulers, what humiliation! And worse was to come, 2 Kings

25, 1—7. The beautiful tree of the house of David became a mere rotten stump. The weak in faith asked, What of the promises of God to David? 2 Sam. 7, 12—16; 23, 5. The ship of David seemed to be about to be swallowed up of the waves. Then Isaiah steps forth and tells of a root of this house of David, the Son of Jesse. There is still life in the root, and a rod shall come forth, a branch of the root and shall inherit all the glorious promises of God.

b) What or who is meant by this Branch from the decaying stump of the house of David? A King more glorious than any that has gone before. There is only one possibility — the King is the greatest and most renowned of all of David's descendants: Jesus, the Son of Mary, whose name is above every name.

The evangelists of the New Testament are very careful to prove that the Babe born at Bethlehem is the Branch that has come forth from the old withered stem of the house of Jesse, Matt. 1, 1—16; Luke 3, 23—31. Those who believed in Jesus called Him the Son of David, Matt. 9, 27; 15, 22; 21, 9; Mark 10, 47. He Himself pointed to the fact that He is both the Son and the Lord of David, Matt. 22, 43. Peter on Pentecost: Acts 2, 22—36. John: Rev. 5, 5. James: Acts 15, 16.

What these men of God have taught by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that is what we believe. (Second Article.) Therefore we are making ready to celebrate the breaking forth of this Branch of Jesse in the sweet and pure Child of Mary. Hymn 151, 1. 2.

c) Nor is our interest chiefly in the house of David, but rather in all that God has promised to do for us through this Descendant of King David, Text, vv. 2—5.

According to these words He is to be the very Man whom this world needs. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him. Indeed, He shall be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. He is to be anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, John 3, 34.

Not a king who through sloth or inattention or wickedness neglects his people or brings misery and suffering upon them, but one who is of quick understanding and prompt to take action. He will not depend upon what the eyes of the body see, but without being told, He will know what is in man, John 2, 25. Before Him the poor and the rich are both alike, Acts 10, 34. Oh, to have such a Ruler in this world, where there is so much imperfection, miscarriage of justice, success of hypocrisy, and contempt for the meek! Either we want such a one, or we ourselves take pleasure in unrighteousness. Those who waited for the consolation of Israel recognized Him at once. "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs." When He opened His mouth, what wisdom, truth, and power in every one of His words! "No man ever spake like this Man." Think of the Lord's Prayer, — who has ever known of another prayer like it? Think of the Beatitudes, think of His sacerdotal prayer, think of His address to His disciples before His crucifixion, as recorded in chapters 13 to 16 of St. John. No wonder the people heard Him gladly. And the people are still hearing Him. Those whose minds are not darkened by Satan, 2 Cor. 4, 3. 4, rejoice in the words of this Jesus as in great spoil. More to be desired are His words than gold, yea, than much fine gold; they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

d) And what of His works? His very miracles show that He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Disease, leprosy, blindness, and defilement of every sort fled from His presence. Health, life, and joy followed His footsteps. Death itself had to flee and surrender its prey, for He brought life and immortality to light.

Nor was all this done for the men of His generation only. No, since then, down to this day, His words are spirit and life, John 6, 63. Those who are touched by their holy fire are transformed and become new creatures. They know in whom they have believed and cling to His words as to the anchor of their souls. When they are confronted by the question whether they will leave Him, they answer with Peter: John 6, 68. 69. They sing: Hymn 88, 1.

Just so His life was not for His generation only, but for all generations, for us also. Not only the house of David, not only the people of Israel, had been ruined and had become wasted, withered, dying, but the whole world lay in wickedness. Death and destruction, tyranny and deceit, superstition and cruelty, stalked the earth. Right into the midst of all this filth, darkness, and poverty came that pure and innocent Babe! He seemed but a mere tender twig, scarcely able to sustain the life that had just begun to glow within it; but the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and, lo, He bore it all and freed us from the accursed load. By His righteousness in life and His suffering for sin He redeemed and rescued us lost and condemned sinners from death, from sin, and from the power of the devil; He purchased for us pardon and forgiveness. With His very blood He has filled a fountain to cleanse us from our filth and sin. And, having cleansed the poor and needy, He provides them with the wedding-garment, seats them at His table, adopts them into His family, and enriches them with temporal and eternal blessings. Never, never, shall we tire of speaking and singing His praise. Hymn 223, 4.

Our children are preparing, choirs are preparing, pastors are preparing, to tell, to speak, and to sing of all that He has done for us, this Branch of Jesse, this tender Shoot from the dry ground that has grown up and is becoming ever mightier and more powerful. Even now His Church has greeted Him with its glad hosannas, and faithful people repeat: "Thine are we, David, and on Thy side, Thou Son of Jesse. Peace, peace, be unto Thee and peace be unto Thine helpers, for Thy God helpeth Thee," 1 Chron. 12, 18.

Is there one who has not yet tasted what it means to live in the company of Jesus, to have His Word cheer his heart, to have His pardon spoken to his soul? Come, then, and drink of this Fountain which shall be in you "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Or are there those whose joy in the Lord has abated, whose fervency of love has cooled? Come and see the Branch of Jesse break forth from the withered stump. Behold in the Babe of Bethlehem the Father's power and the Father's love. Draw near to His fire of love that through His words there may begin again to burn in our hearts the bright flame of faith and love.

2.

But where is the realm of this Son of David? Who are His subjects?

Of all this our text also speaks, vv. 6—10.

a) First of all we learn from these words that this Branch of Jesse shall have a realm which extends over all the earth, v. 9. That is what Jesus told that Samaritan woman, John 4, 21—24. And again He said: Luke 17, 20. He uses no weapons of force, but the truth, which woos and wins the soul, John 18, 36. 37; Luke 17, 20. 21. — The futility of Chiliasm.

b) And just as His kingdom differs from all others in that it is not territorial, but universal, wherever He is accepted by true faith of the heart, so His kingdom differs in its fruits and benefits.

It is a kingdom of peace: "wolf and lamb," "leopard and kid," "lion and fatling," etc. Pictures of peace. This Branch of Jesse has brought the peace of God to the world. Forgiveness and pardon, Eph. 2, 13—18. In the midst of the worst battle the child of God has peace, Phil. 4, 7.

And that makes every member of His kingdom a peacemaker. Fifth Petition. Paul, that bloody persecutor, was by this Son of David turned into a man of peace, who carried love, charity, and good will wherever he went, 1 Cor. 13. True it is that some have come in the name of this Jesus and have taken the sword, as Peter did, have persecuted with prison, gun, and fire all who opposed them; yet all who did this neither knew Christ nor His kingdom, Luke 9, 54—56; John 16, 1—3. All true, loyal subjects of this Son of David are led by a Child, V. 6. Whatever their sinful nature inclines them to, though by nature they be lions, leopards, wolves, bears, asps, or adders, this Branch of Jesse transforms them into the most kind, delightful, useful, and blessed people, who harm no one, but spread blessing, life, and joy wherever they go. They are blessed with peace and a thousand other gifts and bestow these same gifts upon all who meet them and will accept them, Gen. 12, 2; Matt. 5, 13. 14; John 4, 14; 20, 19—23.

True it is that the sinful flesh and blood which we still carry with us mars this beautiful picture. But even against this poison of our own sin there is the tree whose fruit cures us, purifies and heals us, Rev. 2, 2b. This is the tree which sweetens all bitter waters, Ex. 15, 25. We know the Fountain in which we are cleansed and whence new life, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost enters our souls. And finally in glory even our imperfection shall be replaced by perfection, 1 Cor. 13, 9—12; Phil. 3, 12. 13; Rev. 7, 14—17; 22, 3—5.

Are you a subject of this Son of David? Are you such a child of peace, looking forward to the eternal peace of heaven? Be sure not to miss or lose this greatest and purest joy of this blessed season. S.

Christmas Eve.

(Based on "Unto us a Child is born," Is. 9, 6.)

Dear Children: —

Radiant happiness beams from your faces. This is Christmas Eve, the night in which more children rejoice together than at any other time of the year. It is Christmas Eve; the night in which bright lights illuminate homes and churches; the night in which glad voices pour forth thanksgiving and praise to the gracious God of heaven and earth; Christmas Eve, when children are more popular than at any other time, when they receive more attention and more smiles than on any other day.

What is the cause of these celebrations, this joy, this thanksgiving, this singing, this ringing of bells, and this chiming of sweet melodies?

1.

The cause is announced in a few simple words by the great evangelist of the Old Testament: "Unto us a Child is born." The birth of a Child, — that is the cause of all our joy. That must have been a wonderful Child to cause all this illumination, singing, and happiness! Indeed, it is a wonderful Child; in fact, it is the most wonderful Child that was ever born on this earth. It is the only Child that has received the name "Wonderful"; for in a peculiar sense it is God's Child. God has given us His only-begotten Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, to become a little Babe in Bethlehem.

A great and mighty wonder
  Our Christmas Festal brings:
On earth, a lowly Infant,
  Behold the King of kings!

The Word is made incarnate,
  Descending from on high;
And cherubim sing anthems
  To shepherds, from the sky.

This event did not produce joy only at the time when it happened. It filled children's hearts with gladness long before it ever happened, because it was foretold. The same prophet who spoke the words of our text said also: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel," that is, God with us. Just as you, dear children, rejoice while looking forward to Christmas, so the children of God in the Old Testament became happy when they looked forward to the birth of this Child; for when this Child was born, God Himself, the Creator of heaven and earth, became one of our family, became a human being.

He who Himself all things did make
A servant's form vouchsafed to take
That He as man mankind might win
And save His creatures from their sin.

He became a little child such as you are and such as you were in your infancy. When God promised this in the Old Testament, many did not believe it; but the faithful people of God did believe it and looked forward with great joy to the day when God would fulfil His promise. And this promise God did fulfil. He gave His Son. The Child was born, even as our text states. We can now sing: —

Let the earth now praise the Lord,
Who hath truly kept His word
And the sinners' Help and Friend
Now at last to us doth send.

What the fathers most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

Abram's promised great Reward,
Zion's Helper, Jacob's Lord,
Him of twofold race behold,
Truly came, as long foretold.

When after four thousand years of waiting this Child was born and God's promises were fulfilled, the event was proclaimed by the angels of heaven, who told the waiting believers of Bethlehem's plains: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," Luke 2, 11. And still more angels came, and they praised God for His faithfulness, for His power, for His grace and good will toward men, by singing: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men!" Luke 2, 14.

Dear children, there are those who think it sad to be born in this world of sin and sorrow. And it is, if you know nothing of the birth of this Child. But since this Child was born and God Himself has taken our flesh upon Himself, we can, and ought to, thank and praise God that He has permitted us to be born in this world, to be of His flesh and of His blood and to have such a Brother. We always were God's creatures, but through the birth of this Child we have become members of His own family, of His own flesh and blood.

Rejoice, ye sons of men, alway!
God comes to you from heaven to-day;
The Lord is born a little Child
Of Mary, virgin undefiled.

2.

Indeed, that was the purpose of the birth of this Child, to make us rich, blessed, and happy. He is born "unto us," for our benefit. We sorely needed some one to come and help us, for our parents had sinned, had lost Paradise, had lost the image of God, had lost their holiness and their happiness. In fact, they had lost everything that is worth having and had become servants and slaves of their worst enemy. We needed a mighty Helper, and therefore we rejoice; for "unto us a Child is born." This very Child is this mighty and omnipotent Helper. There was no one of the human race strong enough to fight victoriously against our enemies and to free us from our bondage. But here came the great Hero, the Lion of Judah, the Son of David, far greater than David, to slay one far mightier than Goliath — Jesus going forth to do battle against our enemies. And He did it. He freed us, rescued us from the Foe, reconciled us to our Creator. That is what the angels meant when they spoke of the joy that should be to all people.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Of Him Christians have now sung for centuries: —

This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be,
From all your sins to make you free.

He brings those blessings long ago
Prepared by God for all below
That in His heavenly kingdom blest
You may with us forever rest.

But why need I say much more of all that this Child means to you and to me? You yourselves, dear children, are singing and saying that to-night and repeating it, and you never tire of it. And God wants you to sing and to say this. God wants you to be happy and rejoice in the birth of this Child; for through this Child you are to be enriched here, live under God's blessing, till this very Child comes to you and gives you the even greater and lasting joys of heaven.

To this vale of tears He comes
Here to serve in sadness
That with Him in heaven's fair homes
We may reign in gladness.

We are rich, for He was poor;
Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore
Here on earth and yonder.

Come, then, let us all, parents and children, stand in spirit about the manger, the cradle of this Child born unto us, and worship Him, rejoice in Him, give thanks for Him.

Come hither, ye faithful, triumphantly sing;
Come, see in the manger our Savior and King!
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
O come ye, come hither, to worship the Lord!

And as you stand there, be sure that your heart reechoes with the words of praise: —

To Thee, then, O Jesus, this day of Thy birth,
Be glory and honor through heaven and earth,
True Godhead incarnate, omnipotent Word!
O come, let us hasten to worship the Lord!

Amen. S.

Christmas Day.

Matt. 1, 18—25.

Some think that there is only one Gospel-lesson for Christmas, the story of the birth of the Savior as told by St. Luke. And we do not blame them overmuch. What a wonderful story that is! It tells us of the time when this all-important event took place, when Caesar Augustus ruled the then-known world. It shows us how God uses the mighty rulers for His plans and purposes. Caesar Augustus issues a decree that all the world should be taxed, or enrolled, and thus brought about the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where the promised Messiah was to be born. The story tells us of the great poverty and lowliness in which He was born. Mary "laid the blessed Child in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn." But, on the other hand, how great and wonderful this Child must be; for an angel from heaven announces his birth to the frightened shepherds on Bethlehem's fields, and the angelic host sings praises to God: "Glory to God in the highest!"

But, after all, the present text has a force and contains a blessing which is to be added to that in the account of St. Luke. In this text from St. Matthew we are told how God through an angel revealed to Joseph, the foster-father of the Savior here on earth, the supernatural conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost in the Virgin Mary, directing him to call His name Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. All this was foretold by the prophet of old: "Behold, a virgin," etc. As our theme we take the words of St. Paul: —

"Great Is the Mystery of Godliness: God was Manifest in the Flesh."

We meditate —

1. On His miraculous origin, *2. On His blessed work.*

1.

St. Luke relates that the same angel Gabriel who had announced to Zacharias the birth of a son who was to be the forerunner of Christ was six months later sent to the Virgin Mary in Nazareth to tell her that she was to become the mother of the Son of the Highest.

Her question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" received the answer: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." To this the virgin replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

It seems that Mary did not tell Joseph the awful mystery of her conception, but committed it entirely to the Lord. St. Matthew tells us in our text what took place in the heart of Joseph when Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost. He did not intend to make her a public example, but to put her away, give her a letter of divorcement, privily. But while he was thus minded, an angel of the Lord communicated to him in a dream the miraculous origin of the Holy Child who was to be born of Mary. It was of the Holy Ghost, God manifest in the flesh, the Son of God assuming human nature in a virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness.

To Joseph as well as to Mary it was announced that the name of the Child was to be Jesus, meaning Jehovah's salvation, or Jehovah Savior, the interpretation being added: "For He shall save His people from their sins."

Furthermore it is added that all this was in accordance with what had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who said: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child," etc., Is. 7, 14.

Here we have the conception by the Holy Ghost; the name above every name, Jesus, Jehovah, the Savior, interpreted; "for He shall save His people from their sins"; His birth of a virgin; and again a divine name given to Him, Emmanuel, God with us, God manifested in our flesh and blood. All this proves His divine origin.

It is especially necessary and of the greatest importance in our days to bear in mind what Scripture teaches concerning this point. For many of those who still lay claim to the name of Christian think it neither credible nor necessary that our Savior had to be the Son of God, very God of very God; they even scoff at the idea of a virgin birth of Christ.

We believe with the Bible, Ps. 49, 7. 8: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever)."

Salvation of sinful mankind could be brought about by no creature; only the eternal, almighty Son of God could bear the sins of the world. Those who think and speak of Christ as a mere man, though the wisest and holiest of them, who claim that little or nothing depends on a divine origin of the Savior, but that everything depends on His doctrine, have no conception of the enormity of sin. Sin with them is a mere weakness and not the awful transgression of the Law of a holy and righteous God, entailing for mankind the terrible consequences only too clearly before the eyes of all: an evil conscience, misery and wretchedness a thousandfold, and death; mankind being absolutely helpless and powerless to bring about the slightest alleviation, in spite of all so-called progress, discoveries, and inventions. We have the death-bed experiences and confessions of those who trusted in their own righteousness and merits that in the solemn hour of departure from this world nothing but the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, could give any comfort and consolation over against the accusations of an awakened conscience. Indeed, to one to whom sin is a mere weakness, easily overlooked and forgiven, it may not seem necessary that our Redeemer had to be true God in order to be able to redeem us from sin and the wrath of God over sin. But whoever has, by his own actual experience, felt the awful power of sin and God's fiery indignation against it, such a one can find comfort and consolation only in the assurance that the eternal Son of God has become our Substitute and paid an all-sufficient ransom for us.

This, then, is the reason why Christmas is such a joyful season; it reminds us of the love of the heavenly Father, who gave to a sinful world His only-begotten Son, who, assuming our flesh and blood out of great, unspeakable love, came to us on earth that we through Him might come back into the communion of God and become heirs of eternal life and salvation. This, however, has brought us to the second part of our meditation: the blessed *work* He was to undertake for us, for our salvation.

2.

This is indicated by the very name given to the Child born for us, Jesus, and the interpretation added to it: "for he shall save His people from their sins," as St. Paul tells us: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

In what does this work of salvation, saving sinners, consist? As soon as this becomes clear to us, then indeed we understand why the angel told the shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy"; then our Christmas joy rests on solid ground.

According to Holy Scriptures, God's curse rests upon every sin. This curse makes itself felt in the heart and conscience of every human being; is before the eyes of all in the evil consequences of sin, as pain, sickness, misery; is especially apparent in death. "We are consumed by Thine anger; by Thy wrath are we troubled."

How utterly futile it is to deny these facts or to see and seek in modern progress, discoveries, inventions, or achievements a means of alleviation or mitigation from these evils! Though material progress were a thousand times greater than it is, it would not bring about freedom from an evil conscience nor from suffering and death. Helpless and hopeless sinful mankind stands face to face with these conditions brought on it by its fall into sin.

There is only one Helper and Deliverer, the only-begotten Son of God, sent into the world for the very purpose of redeeming, setting free, sinful mankind from sin and its terrible consequences, as indicated by the very name he assumed, Jesus, Jehovah-Savior.

We know in what way He brought about our salvation. He assumed our nature, our flesh and blood, in order to be able to suffer and die for us and thus to set us free from the guilt, punishment, and dominion of sin. By making this sacrifice for us, giving Himself as a ransom for our iniquities, He gave the greatest proof of His love; and it is this love of the heavenly Father and of the eternal Son of the Father, as revealed in His incarnation, that wins back the heart of sinners to God. Wherever this love of God in His only-begotten Son is preached and taken to heart, new spiritual life is created, heavenly joy takes hold of the soul, and heart and soul join in the praise of God for His unspeakable gift.

Alas! so many of them for whom this Savior came remain cold and unresponsive at the glad tidings of his coming. St. John says: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." St. Paul: "The world through its wisdom knew not God." "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

This awful indictment of mankind threatens to dampen our joy in the glad tidings of Christmas. The world does not care for a Savior from sin. It is concerned about earthly things. It is only too apparent that the almost universal joy pervading the so-called Christian countries during the Christmas season is not over God's Gift to a sinful world, but has its source in other things. Satan, alas! has succeeded in drawing the attention, even of many that call themselves after the name of our blessed Savior, exclusively to earthly presents and festivities, and thus robs them of the heavenly joy, which alone is able to fill and satisfy the heart.

This joy can be had only when with Mary, the mother of the Savior, we keep all these things and ponder them in our hearts and with the shepherds return to our daily task, glorifying and praising God for all the things we have heard and seen concerning the birth of a Savior. Amen.

F. C. VERWIEBE.

New Year's Eve.

Gen. 47, 8.

Time is one of the most important assets we have. Some say, Time is money. We can improve on that and say, Time is *opportunity*. Given your faculties of body and mind and *time*, you should ask for no more in matters temporal.

But how should we employ or invest time? is the question. Wisely spent, it brings blessings; unwisely spent, it brings remorse. Still we all lean to thoughtlessness in the way we put in our time. We spend day after day much in the same routine; we start with the Sunday, and before we are aware of it, Saturday closes the week; we hardly know where the time went and what we have done. Nor are we very much concerned about that. It is only on a birthday or on New Year's Day that we halt for a moment, that we count our years, that we realize that God puts to us the question, "How old art thou?"

You have had a certain number of years given you. What have you to show for it? Have those who associate with you been helped or harmed by your life? And how much have you personally profited by the years you spent? How much wiser and better and stronger in character are you than you were a year ago, ten years ago?

1. Let us review that part of our life which is past.

When looking over the past, we especially of riper years will recall many advantages of which we did not fully avail ourselves, many opportunities we neglected. Perhaps there was a turning-point in our life, but we failed to grasp the situation. You have often heard a person say: "If I had to do this over again, I would do so and so; then I would not be, as I am now, in comparative poverty, but in affluence; instead of an inferior position I would fill a position of prominence." Possibly so, but you might then have lost out spiritually; and "what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

But, says another, I have lived the life of a child of God, and yet I have virtually nothing to show for the past, and I feel humiliated. Here is the housewife who day by day, year after year has faithfully attended to her duties, and at the end of the year she has nothing tangible to show. Here is the farmer; the yearly rotation of crops brings the accustomed work. There is the clerk, the employee; what is there to show even after a number of years? There are the day-laborers, the domestic servants. — Ah, here is a great mistake we mortals make. We think it is only the sky-scraper that is worth looking at, not the humble hut of the peasant, and that only persons of prominence are worth recognizing, not those in the humble walks of life. It is the sleek, well-groomed race-horse we think we should admire, hardly the nag that draws the plow or the wagon. — But, my friends, we should realize that the backbone of a nation does not consist of half a dozen prominent men, but of the many honest, law-abiding, God-fearing citizens, if God has given the nation such. Without the rank and file we would have no nation. We can do without the sky-scrapers if we must, but not without the thousands of homes scattered throughout this broad land of ours. We could do without the high-priced race-horse, but we must have our fields plowed and our loads hauled. Coming down to the very small things, the poet says: —

Little drops of water, little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean and the beauteous land.
And our little moments, humble though they be,
Make the mighty ocean of eternity.

It is the infinitesimal microbe or germ, hardly discernible under the microscope, that may kill you while you are carefully avoiding the elephant and the lion. The little, minute sin, — minute in the eyes of men, — the wrong thought, does the mischief; this is the breeder of the theft, the murder, etc. On the other hand, it is those of pure thoughts who shall see God; it is the little deeds of kindness that make life happy, and the daily strict attendance to duty which makes life a success. Therefore, if you are a child of God, do not say you have lived and worked in vain. Nay, your daily walk with God is not at all to be despised, for the sum total of these days make out the life of a Christian; and of such works of God's children the seer says: "Their works do follow them," Rev. 14, 13.

The Lord has led you the way He did *for a purpose.* You profited by it. You gained in experience, though not always conscious of it. And experience is the mother of wisdom. For one thing, you have discovered the weak points in your character — a great advantage. You can *avoid mistakes* in the future. And this will induce you the more eagerly to seek the guidance of God, so He may hold you safely on slippery and dangerous paths.

Again, when we look back over the last year or years, many an occurrence now appears of *insignificant importance* which at the time *threatened to overwhelm us.* We saw it come on like a black, lowering cloud; we called on God, "Lord, help us," and it passed by. And what has become of those mortifying disappointments which we then felt so keenly? And that death in the family that cut to the quick, has not the comfort of God's Word mellowed the pain, perhaps healed the wound? Rest assured that the threatening dangers of the future will be controlled by the same strong, loving hand of God.

True, *we all have had our cares and troubles.* I have not yet found an elderly man or woman who did not readily admit that. Jacob did. In answering the question Pharaoh put to him he confessed: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Jacob was not soured, he was not a pessimist. On another occasion he exclaimed, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant." But it seems to be human nature to spend much of one's time in regretting the past and in building air-castles for the future. Even the pleasurable scenes of our youth we half-way regret because they are past and gone.

And now, *which thoughts of the past are really permanently pleasant,* leaving no tinge of regret? I appeal to you if what you recollect with most pleasure be not the hours employed in cultivating your mind, in discharging with fidelity the duties of your calling, in assisting the deserving, relieving the distressed, reaping the thanks of those benefited. Above all you will recall without remorse your hours of earnest searching of self in the mirror of God's Law, of communing with God in prayer, asking for daily remission and absolution; you will recall without regret and with earnest thanks the hours you spent here in the house of God, in His holy presence; the times you, in communion with fellow-Christians, entered into the closest communion possible with your Savior at His Table.

If recollections such as these leave no regrets, but only pleasant memories, let us have more of them. This takes us from the *past* of our life to the *present,* in the consideration of the question, "How old art thou?"

2. Let us redeem the time while it is day.

After all, the present is the *supremely important* time. The recollections of the past are of importance only as they act on the present. The past to us is gone, the future is not here, and we are reminded of Longfellow's word's: "Let the dead past bury its dead. Act, act in the living present, Heart within and God o'erhead." Translated into words of inspiration, we quote: "Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it *now* with all thine might"; for "*now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

Therefore let us redeem the time while it is yet day, before the night cometh when no man can work. How are you going to spend the time allotted to you? When President Harper of the Chicago University was told by his physicians that he had only three more months to live, he was at the time engaged on several literary works of importance, and he then consulted with his colleagues which one to select in an effort to finish it in the brief time left him. The wise man wisely apportions his time, and there *the interests in his soul are of greatest moment to him.* "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." Do not fail to look upon the Savior. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

And when giving *first attention to spiritual interests,* this will necessarily result in the regular and conscientious attendance to all the duties of ordinary life; for this, in turn, will again promote the spiritual interests. Hence, whatever our age, our character, our profession, or our station in life requires us to do, in that let each revolving day find us busy. Defer not to to-morrow what you know should be done to-day. "Delay not to to-morrow to be wise; To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise."

But beware not to take to-morrow's burdens and cares for to-day. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sometimes we take the regrets and remorses of the past and the cares and worries of the morrow and the duties and responsibilities of the hour and place this load on our shoulders and complain to the good Lord that He gives us too much to carry.

I believe there is a thought coming to the surface: So there is nothing but burdens to bear and duties to perform. Are there no enjoyments, no pleasures for the Christian? Do you know that this church was built that you might enjoy yourself and that you might be happy? God created you for the one purpose — to be happy. The only question is, What kind of enjoyment are you going to indulge in? The devil points one way, God another. The papers again told us this holiday season of a number of deaths and a greater number of hospital cases and accidents resulting from overindulgence in intoxicants. You will say, I am not in that class. True, but let us abstain from *any* pleasure that is in any sense or degree *sinful,* for it does not pay. The after-effects are a disquieted conscience; something foreign has come between us and our Savior, who died for us that we might live. Nay, what we want is a *continued* daily life of contentment and happiness, enjoying the harmless pleasures God has placed all around us. Life is then not a vale of tears to us, but really worth living.

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream,
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

3. This reminds us of the third subdivision of time, the future.

Jacob was gathered to his fathers some seventeen years after the question of this text was put to him. It is the future that has a peculiar interest for us. If we had reverses in the past, if we are unsuccessful in the present, we still hope for a better future. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." God has wisely implanted this hope for a better future in the human breast. Kill it, and melancholy, even blank despair, may enter.

And God has wisely veiled the future. If we knew a misfortune or accident would befall us on a certain future date, it would make us miserable; if we knew of the good fortune, it would make us overexpectant and neglectful of daily duties.

And still people, prompted by a morbid curiosity, attempt to inquire into what is to come. To consult fortune-tellers, soothsayers, etc., is at once foolish and anti-Biblical. Futurity belongs to God, and He has not revealed it to any soothsayer.

However, my hearers, the future, according to God's Word, is not an entire blank to us.

First, you will not meet with perfect happiness in this life. We are living in a world contaminated with sin. Learn to put up with disappointments. And learn to see and to magnify the silver lining in the cloud that hides the sun of your happy expectations. The older Christian has learned this lesson, the younger has to learn it and, if he profits by it, can make life happier.

Another prediction we can safely make for the future is this: The ingredients for true happiness are a good conscience, based on faith in the Redeemer, and implicit trust in the guidance of God. While you have the experience of the past to profit by, you do not know what the morrow will bring. Therefore your prayer should be: —

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
  Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
  Lead me by Thy powerful hand.

If the Lord is your Shepherd, you will not want.

Finally, two events will most certainly come to pass — *death and Judgment,* and to the Christian these need not be gruesome words. What is death? A temporary parting of soul and body, to be reunited on the day of resurrection, this mortal body having put on immortality, this corruptible having put on incorruption. Anything terrible about that? Paul said, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ." *There* we may look for perfect happiness because of the absence of sin and the consequences of sin.

And now once more, "How old art thou?" We are not going to count by years and months and days. How old was our Lord when He died? We do not know the exact years, but we answer in the words of our Creed, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," etc. All this was crowded into about thirty-three years. How old was St. Paul? That is summed up in the grand epistles he wrote, his imprisonment, his martyr's death at Rome. Your years on the Last Day will be counted by the service you rendered the Master, including that of leading fellow-men to righteousness. Dan. 12, 3.

Let this thought be the guiding star as we close this old year and await the new; then, even if we be called upon to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil. Amen.

A. W. MEYER.

New Year's Day.

Luke 13, 1—9.

The old year is behind us. Its record is made. The new year is before us. Its dawn has just come out of the radiant East. Its record is to be made. And what shall it be? Will it be like that of the unfruitful fig-tree in our text? Will the new year be for good or bad? Will it be for progress or retrogression? God grant that it may be a truly blessed year.

To help us to enter the new year in the proper way is the object of our present service. O that we might all know and understand the secret of entering the new year in such a way as to make it a truly happy year! On the basis of to-day's text and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit permit me to answer briefly the question: —

What Is the Secret of a Truly Happy New Year?

That secret is —

1. *To recognize the new year as another year of opportunity;*
2. *To know that God's grace will be with us;*
3. *To know that Christ intercedes for us.*

1.

To the world, New Year's Day is like any other day of the year. There are many people who say that New Year's Day means nothing to them. They are the type of people to whom a birthday, an anniversary celebration, means nothing. People who cannot step out with new vim and vigor on New Year's Day miss a great deal of the joy and happiness of this occasion.

For us Christians there is a hallowedness about the entrance of the new year. For it is a new beginning, it is a new opportunity to live a better life. It is an invitation to make a new start and to do things in a better way, to be more successful here in life and happy in the life hereafter. For us New Year's Day is a reminder of the fact that our sojourn here in this world is simply a period of probation.

Now, our text begins with a reference to the impending doom of Israel foreshadowed by a tragedy which had befallen certain individuals, and it ends with a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, similar to that which closes the great anti-Pharisaic discourse in Matt. 23. There Jesus says: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!" This warning is appropriate for New Year's Day. It directs us to take a look into the future and a retrospect over the past. As we greet each other to-day and say: "I wish you a happy New Year," we indicate that we are looking into the future. The season of the year as well as the text therefore require that we should remember that the beginning of a new year is another year of opportunity and service to be rendered unto Christ. It is another opportunity to give evidence of the fact that we desire to live as servants of Christ laboring in His kingdom.

The Parable of the Fig-tree undoubtedly offers an excellent New Year's suggestion. We are told that Jesus sought fruit on the fig-tree, but He sought in vain. God seeks fruit in the lives of Christians. Will He seek in vain? Jesus found nothing but leaves on this fig-tree. Will we grasp the opportunity offered to us during the coming year and bring forth fruit? Will Jesus at the end of the year find nothing but leaves? Let us recognize it as a year of opportunity granted by our gracious Lord. Let us enter the new year by renewing our baptismal vow. Hymn 355, 1.

2.

Let us recognize it as a year of grace in time of sorrow.

At the close of the old year and the beginning of the new the press of our nation usually gives a complete report on the number of catastrophes that occurred during the past three hundred and sixty-five days. We read statistics concerning the number of accidental deaths, earthquakes, cyclones, and other great calamities. As we review all these records, we note that we are still among the living. This is due to God's grace alone. Our sins deserved punishment, damnation. Jesus, the merciful Savior, preserved us.

It was this very thought which prompted Jesus to give answer to the report of the peculiar tragedy which is recorded in vv. 1—5 of the 13th chapter. And what a tragic story it is! It is not mentioned by any other historians of the time. Josephus mentions Pilate's killing of some Samaritans who under a leader were going in a tumultuous manner to the Mount of Gerizim, where the Samaritans' temple was built. Some think that these Galileans were of the faction of Judas, Gaulonite, who is called Judas of Galilee in Acts 5, 37. It is said that these people disavowed Caesar's authority and refused to pay tribute to him; therefore they were barbarously murdered as such as were suspected of sedition.

We are not told just how many Galileans were killed. Perhaps there were but few, but Pilate evidently had a grudge against them. The sacred historian records that he mingled their blood with their sacrifices. While these Galileans were killing their sacrifices, Pilate's soldiers came upon them by surprise; and thus it happened that their blood was mingled with that of their sacrifices.

V. 2. Jesus answered with a question. Those who told the story expected Him to make some remark on it; not such, doubtless, as He did make. "Think ye?" Probably that is exactly what they did think. The fate of the Galileans awakened superstitious horror. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans?" He impresses upon their mind the necessity of suppressing such false imagination. God has not singled out any particular individuals to bring down upon them such a calamity as a punishment. Ye are all alike, ye are all sinners. To impress this upon His hearers, Jesus immediately introduces the example of men of their own province, the victims of the horrible disaster of Siloam. Therefore Jesus answers in v. 3, "I tell you, Nay." This is an emphatic no, followed by a solemn "I say unto you."

Jesus adds, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The curse of God and the eternal doom awaits all impenitent sinners. All, however, have the same grace offered unto them.

Towers like the tower of Siloam are built for safety, but often prove men's destruction. Of the *Titanic,* men boasted "it was built for the safety of men," it was "an unsinkable ship"; but contrary to the boasting of men, it went to the depths of the sea on its maiden voyage. Jesus cautioned His hearers not to make ill use of such events, not to interpret them as indicating that those who suffered in such a tragedy were greater sinners than others.

Now the lesson of the fig-tree is presented by Jesus to teach the very lesson of God's infinite grace.

Though we, too, in the past year have experienced many trials and temptations, though catastrophes and calamities have occurred, yet we know that God's grace was with us and will be with us in the new year. To realize the significance of the assurance that God's grace in Christ Jesus is with us is the secret of entering the new year in a truly Christian way.

The advantages which the fig-tree had: It was planted in a vineyard; it was planted in better soil, more care was taken thereof, and more pains taken with it than other fig-trees, which commonly grew, not in vineyards, but by the wayside, Matt. 21, 19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain man, who was put to expense by it. Now, the Church of God is the vineyard, distinguished from the rest of humanity, fenced about, Is. 5, 1. 2: "I will sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it," etc. We are like fig-trees planted in God's vineyard, namely, by our baptism. It is our privilege to have a place and a name in the visible Church. This is a distinguishing favor. By the grace of God we are what we are, 1 Cor. 5, 10.

Looking at these facts, we must realize that God has placed us in a favorable position for bringing forth fruit. Indeed, that is His purpose, Eph. 2, 10. And we are in a position to bring forth fruit. We live in a prosperous country.

As church-members also we have been blessed. The Gospel has been preached, our congregation has increased in knowledge and in membership. We must therefore remember much will be required of us, Luke 12, 48.

Note the owner's expectations: *"He came and sought fruit thereon."* He had a reason to expect it. He did not send, but he came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, came unto His own, seeking fruit. The God of heaven requires and expects fruit from those that have a place in His vineyard. He has His eyes upon those that enjoy the Gospel. He sees whether they live up to it; He seeks evidences of their becoming good by the means of grace they enjoy. Leaves will not do, blossoms will not do, there must be fruit. Our words and actions must be according to His will, commensurate with our blessings, 2 Cor. 6, 1.

Note the disappointment of His expectations: He "found none," none at all, not even one fig.

It is sad to think how many enjoy the privilege of the Gospel and yet do nothing at all to the honor of God and to realize the end of His entrusting them with that privilege; and it is a disappointment to Him and a grief to the Spirit of His grace. Note that the owner complains to the dresser of the vineyard: "Behold, three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none." He is disappointed. He emphasizes two considerations: He had waited long and yet was disappointed; and he was not high in his expectations, he only expected fruit. He was not hasty; he came three years, year after year. Is it not true that God came thus to Israel of old? He came before the Captivity, and He came after the Captivity. He came preaching at the time of John the Baptist, and then Christ Himself came. It may also be that Jesus referred to the years of His ministry. These were now drawing to an end.

The lesson taught here is that the patience of God is wretchedly abused. This abuse provokes God so much that He must administer severe punishment. How many times, how many years, has God come to many! He sought fruit, and He has found none!

That this fig-tree did not bring forth fruit did indeed hurt, but — worse still — it cumbered the ground. It took up the room of a fruitful tree. Those who do not do good commonly do hurt by the influence of their bad example. They grieve and discourage those that are good, that try to do their duty. They harden and discourage those that are bad. And the mischief is greater, and the ground is the more cumbered, if it be a high, large, spreading tree and if it be an old tree of long standing. It takes up that much more room, it prevents that much more fruit from being produced by younger trees.

Truly a manifestation of God's grace that He tolerates such negligence and has not sent His judgments to punish such as cumber the ground. Let guilty ones seek God's mercy and promise amendment.

3.

Now the sentence is passed upon it. Cut it down, the master says to the dresser of this vineyard, *i. e.,* to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are in His name to declare this doom. Is it not right? Nothing else can be expected concerning this barren tree but that they should cut it down. Is. 5, 6. Unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it. They are cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgment, such as that on the Jews who believe not. Is. 6, 9. 10. They are cut down by death and cast into the fire of hell; and this good reason is advanced, "Why cumbereth it the ground?"

Observe how the Lord Jesus intercedes, v. 8. *"And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also."* He proposes a time of waiting to an impatient owner. He promises additional care and effort upon the tree.

Then he adds: "If it bear fruit [the coming year], well; if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." The vinedresser recognizes that the decision will be just. He sympathizes with the master's desire for fruit. Of course, when the barren fig-tree is removed, another will be planted in its place. The parable points to the truth taught in verse 29: "They shall come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

Thus we are assured that Jesus will intercede for us during the coming year.

Place Jerusalem for the tree, and you have what Jesus intended to teach the people of that city by telling them this parable. Cp. Rom. 10, 21; Matt. 23, 37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc. Christ had frequently interceded for the people of the capital of Judea; but now the day of grace was to be closed. Should God waste all His efforts on Israel when others might be found who would appreciate the truth of the Gospel?

Now, the capital of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, is only a picture for the twentieth-century Christians. This is our time of grace. Jesus is still interceding for us. He, too, says to the Father in heaven: One more year. And thus you and I are permitted to enter this year through Christ's intercession. Our sins, our ingratitude, would have deserved that we should have been cut down. But now through the infinite grace of Jesus Christ, who is our Intercessor, we have been permitted to enter upon a new year. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Jesus is our great High Priest, and He is ever making intercession for us. But let us not look upon Christ's long-suffering, patience, and grace lightly. While it is true that Jesus stands there and waits long, that He is patient, yet the time must come when the unfruitful tree must meet its fatal hour.

For each and every one of us a new year dawns to-day. But it may be that before the close of the year some of us will be cut down. Let each one therefore inquire: Is this year my last year? Will I live in such a fashion that I can be assured of salvation? Are you ready to enter the new year with a firm resolution to be a true servant of God this year? All must some day stand before the Judgment-throne of God. There we cannot enter in by congregations, nor by families, nor nationalities, but each and every one will be judged according to his faith in Christ.

The vinedresser pleads and says: "Lord, let it alone this year also." Remember that you and I to-day have Christ as an Intercessor. The fact that we are permitted to enter in upon this new year is due to this intercession of Christ. For Jesus pleads with the Father to give us another opportunity. He intercedes for us and begs for the forgiveness of our sins. "Till I shall dig about it and dung it." This indicates that Christ, our Savior, desires in the course of the coming year to strengthen us in faith, to bring us to greater trust and confidence in Jesus through the Gospel assurance of pardon. Thus we shall not only receive from Jesus, but we shall also return fruit to Him.

This year, then, may be the last year; and God grant that it will be a year in which you will "let your light shine before men," that they may see the glory of the Father in Christ Jesus.

Remember, however, that there will be a limit to Christ's intercession. If you ask me where that limit of forbearance is, I cannot tell you. The truth is that there is such a limit. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." John 15, 6.

The lesson is plain. Let us, at once, turn in repentance and accept Jesus Christ in true faith and thus become part of the true living Vine, which is none other than Jesus Christ, who says of Himself, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Do not tempt the Lord by despising His patience and His intercessory prayer.

John the Baptist said: "The ax is laid to the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." You know not how soon it may be that you shall be cut down and cut off from hope forever, never to see a day of grace again, cut down and cast into the fire of everlasting perdition. Oh, for some soul, therefore, that will be rescued this day! Oh, on this New Year's Day give your heart to Christ! Obey the call of the Lord now, and you will not need to trouble yourselves about the limit of Christ's forbearing. Resolve to-day to make this year a year of seeking God's grace, to use its opportunities that God offers us, and to accept the pardon offered through Christ's intercession, and this will be a truly blessed year. F. L. OBERSCHULTE.

Epiphany.

Luke 4, 16—21.

The observance of Epiphany (appearance, manifestation) dates back to early Christianity, and it centers in the visit and worship of the Wise Men from the East, to whom the guiding star had appeared. The Church calendar gives us six Sundays named after Epiphany, this showing the importance attached to that day. The thought conveyed, namely, that the Christ-child was born not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well, is of great import to us who are of Gentile ancestry.

Epiphany falls on January 6 and is not generally observed on that day, but very properly is not ignored because of its bearing on Christian thought.

Our text bears out the Epiphany theme, for it proclaims universal grace and is of general application. Let us to-day observe —

Epiphany.

1. The Epiphany Preacher; 2. The Epiphany sermon;
3. The Epiphany audience.

1.

a) The preacher, as you know, is our Lord Himself. Oh, you say, how favored those people were to have Christ in person speak to them! You continue: We must put up with merely human speakers, whose imperfections and shortcomings cannot be denied.

True, my friend, that audience was most highly favored, and it would be the greatest presumption, approaching blasphemy, for me, for instance, to place myself on a level with our divine Redeemer. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matt. 7, 29; Luke 4, 32.

b) What lent Him further prestige was the fact that He now returned to His native town with a wonderful record, vv. 14. 15. He had performed miracles, spoken to crowds; His fame had gone out to all the region round about; He had taught in their synagogs and was glorified of all. (Picture a national hero's return to his native town.)

c) How insignificant a merely human preacher in comparison! But for our comfort and for the dignity of the ministerial office, established by this very Head Prophet, let us not overlook that He came and also spoke in His garb of humility. He came to His native town, "where He had been brought up," mingling with the associates of His youth. He was as one of them. "And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" V. 22; Is. 53, 2.

d) He followed "His custom" of attending worship in the synagog. Without doubt He had often attended there as a lad with His parents (Third Commandment). By His true devotion and deference He atoned for our inattention in the house of God. We take from this expression also regularity of attendance. In all this let us follow in His footsteps. He practised what He preached. Being one with the Father and under direct guidance of the Spirit, chap. 4, 1. 14, He could have dispensed with the services of the synagog.

e) But He came this time not only as a hearer, but as a speaker. It reminds us of a seminary graduate who preaches his first sermon in his home congregation. "He stood up for to speak." Without doubt the ruler of the synagog had called on Him to speak, it being customary to call on noted visitors after the usual selections from the Law and the Prophets had been read and commented on. Acts 13, 15. 16. So our Master did not intrude, and He was universally recognized as capable and qualified. With due modesty let us assert that the Church also herein is following the lead of Christ. We call and ordain to the ministry only such as can show the qualifications of education and consecration.

f) He took the "book," the roll of Isaiah. And when He had "opened," unrolled, it, He looked for His text and found it, just as our pastor does. Our model Preacher did not dispense with the Bible. He did not consider Himself superior to it though having Himself inspired it. He made no display of His omniscience, but showed us how to use the Scriptures, chap. 4, 4. 8. 10. 25. 27. He took His text from Holy Writ, spoke from that text (not always done in our day), thus exemplifying that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, Rom. 10, 8. 17; Is. 34, 16.

g) Oh, the great prerogative of the Old Testament people of God in the possession and use of the inspired volume! Rom. 9, 4. They had been given the rich array of prophets and teachers culminating in the Son. We even have the New Testament in addition to the Old, fulfilment to compare with prophecy.

h) Owing to the undeserved grace of God we can make the assertion that we preach the same Law and Gospel Christ preached, an assertion which holds, sad to say, only with the Church which still to-day adheres to the pure Word of God as laid down in our Symbolical Books, notably the Catechism and Augsburg Confession, Luke 10, 16.

Therefore come not to see and hear the messenger, but his message, 1 Cor. 3, 5—7.

Our Epiphany Preacher, you see, is excellent beyond comparison. We now look for an excellent Epiphany sermon, and we shall not be disappointed.

2.

Vv. 18. 19 of our text, taken from Is. 61, 1—3. At a glance we recognize these descriptive words to refer directly and only to the Messiah.

a) He was anointed by the Holy Ghost with the oil of gladness, above His fellows, Ps. 45, 7; Acts 10, 38. The Holy Ghost descended visibly upon Him at the time of His baptism, Luke 3, 22; John 1, 32. His divine and human natures are most intimately connected, merged, resulting in the communication of attributes. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9; John 1, 14. The high significance of being anointed with the Holy Ghost (Ps. 2, 2; 45, 7; Acts 4, 27) is evidenced by the fact that the Old Testament name of Messiah, the Anointed, is applied to the promised Savior. The New Testament equivalent is *Christ,* after whom we Christians are named, Acts 11, 26—28; 1 Pet. 4, 14.

b) In Old Testament times the anointing of a prophet, priest, or king had a double import. It confirmed the appointment to office and recognized the duties of the office. In other words, no one was anointed unless there were duties of his particular office to perform.— We do not ordain a candidate to office unless he is rightly called to work in the Kingdom.

And we shall now see that Christ's singular anointment was not by any means an empty ceremony.

c) *He was to preach the Gospel to the poor.* This is a comprehensive statement, embracing the subdivisions which follow. Who are the poor? Evidently fallen mankind, man lying in the helplessness of sin's tyranny, his soul famished. Born under the curse of the Law, he is doomed to eternal perdition if he remains under that curse, Eph. 2, 1. 3. Such were we all by nature. And "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. 18, 20. Yea, death, temporal and eternal, is the wages of sin, Rom. 6, 23.

True, we were reborn in Holy Baptism, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus 3, 5. 6, and thus were received into the community of saints. But can we claim that we have walked as saints every day of our lives? On the contrary, we agree with Luther that we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. Even our so-called good deeds are marred by imperfections, and if we were to offer them as meritorious in God's sight, we should have to be told that all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags, Is. 64, 6; Rom. 3, 28; Gal. 2, 16.

Therefore the Gospel, the glad tidings, is preached to the poor in spirit, Jas. 2, 5. Those crying in the agony of their hearts and the consciousness of their sins, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" are to be told, "Hear the Gospel news; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. For the promise is unto you and to your children," Acts 2, 37—39. Preaching the Gospel to the poor is given as the climax to Christ's miracles, Matt. 11, 5. Yea, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 5, 3.

This Gospel-truth is deemed so important by the Holy Spirit, who inspired it, that He further impresses it upon us by presenting it to us from various angles.

aa) "He hath sent Me *to heal the broken-hearted.*" Those whose self-righteousness the Law has crushed, broken, shall be healed with the balm of Gilead, Ps. 53, 17; 1 Pet. 2, 24.

bb) To those held captive by sin and Satan, who are helpless and despair of being able to extricate themselves, 1 Cor. 12, 2; 2 Tim. 2, 26, deliverance is proclaimed and actually given, John 8, 36. Jesus, by healing the diseased and the demoniacs, Satan-bound, gave an object-lesson, Luke 13, 16. The worldling often proclaims himself *free* to do exactly as he pleases, throwing off the restraints of God's Word, of his conscience, or the admonitions of friends. But is he not a slave to his passions, to dictates of evil companions? The prodigal was "free" to herd swine and suffer the pangs of hunger and of conscience.

cc) Let us beware of blind guides, Matt. 23, 16. 17. 19. 24. 26. And every natural man is spiritually blind, 1 Cor. 2, 14. Only Christ can open our eyes to see how all Scripture testifies of Him. Luke 24, 32 Christ thus proves Himself "the Light of the world," "the true Light that lighteth every man," "the Dayspring from on high," "the Sun of righteousness."

dd) The bruised carry the scars of their servitude with them — lost opportunities, a life forfeited because of the service of sin, time not redeemed and lost forever. The prodigal did not receive his portion over again, although he received forgiveness and was set at liberty; for the son is not a servant, Gal. 4, 6. 7. 30; Col. 1, 13.

ee) "The acceptable year of the Lord" recalls the Year of Jubilee, Lev. 25, when bond-servants were set free, when forfeited landed properties would revert to their original owners, when debts were canceled, etc. This, too, was proclaimed. "Thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound," Lev. 25, 9. This "acceptable year" is the time of the New Testament, 2 Cor. 6, 2. And this applies also to our time and day as synod, congregation, and individuals. To-day when hearing His voice, harden not your heart, Ps. 95, 8; Heb. 3, 8. 15; 4, 7.

Lord, how often have we failed properly to redeem the time! Let this year, newly begun, prove an acceptable one to Thee through Thy dear Son and the guidance of Thy Holy Spirit!

The Lord's theme or topic based on our text was: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Verily, never man spoke as this man did. He preached *Himself.* We preachers dare not preach ourselves; we preach *Christ and Him crucified.* Without blasphemy Jesus could utter those words, for He is in reality the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He and the Father are one. To deny the deity of Christ, to challenge His veracity, and at the same time to extol Him as the highest ideal of true manhood *is a plain contradiction* and, to put it mildly, makes the Bible a very embarrassing book to preach on.

We are well satisfied with our Epiphany preacher and with our Epiphany sermon; how about the Epiphany audience?

3.

a) We are glad to note, in the first place, that Christ's hearers were *very attentive.* "The eyes of all them that were in the synagog were fastened on Him." Speaking generally, if you go to hear any lecture or program, be attentive. You put in your time, perhaps paid your money, why not get the benefit? Do you know that the *habit* of close attention and observation is one important factor in success? On the other hand, do you realize that inattention on your part disturbs others and possibly the speaker?

All this is given added weight when you are in the house of God and in His holy presence. We sometimes say, The sermon did not *take;* a better wording may be, The sermon was not *taken.* The Lord in our text spoke to each one individually. If we realize that the Lord — not the preacher — is speaking in both Law and Gospel, speaking to each hearer individually as if he were the only one present, it will aid us in fastening our eyes on Him, and we shall receive the blessing intended for us.

b) The audience did more than merely listen attentively. We read: "And all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth," v. 22. So the Lord dilated on the theme that all Scripture is fulfilled in Him. The hearers spoke of the blessings received, likely also in Christ's presence. To let the pastor and fellow-Christians and also outsiders know how great the blessings are which you derive by and through the means of grace and through your communion with those of the household of faith, is a feature characteristic of a good listener. More, it encourages the preacher, who often is afraid that he preached to the deaf. It also helps others to get equal blessings; it draws outsiders to hear the Word.

c) But, alas! not all were hearers of this class. "Is not this Joseph's son?" Mark says these men spoke of Him as "the carpenter." He in this humble garb the promised Messiah! Too humble for us! We are after temporal glory and glitter! "We be Abraham's seed!"

Man's heart is the same to-day. He is attracted by the glow and glimmer of worldly organizations.

Our Synod has assumed respectable proportions; however, it by no means compares with the pompous Roman Church. But that should not discourage or worry us. Our Church is, and should remain, the lowly maid of the lowly Nazarine and should not offer, as an inducement to join it, worldly advantages or political prestige, but insist on the necessity of confessing Christ before men, of taking up the cross and following Him. Forgiveness of sins is free, but it involves service and sacrifice. No man can serve two masters, Matt. 6, 24. "Jesus, I my cross have taken all to leave and follow Thee." Hymn 335.

Then this scripture will be fulfilled not only in our ears, but also in our hearts. Amen.

Suggestions for the Bulletin-Board.

Hear Christ's Epiphany Sermon.
Christ Preaches in the Synagog.
Christ Preaches in His Home Town.
A Message for You Personally.

A. W. MEYER.

First Lenten Outline.

Matt. 26, 57—66.

"Jesus, I will ponder now," etc. (Hymn 192, 1.) With this prayer upon our lips we cross the threshold of the present Lenten season to view with the eyes of faith the suffering of the Son of Man. There we shall see much that is repulsive and still more that attracts. All of it is a power for good, which has demonstrated its value by changing the savage into a member of civilized society and the sinner into a saint. This story of Christ is a mighty magnet; though repugnant to natural man, it has conquered the mightiest nations, and untold millions have been drawn by it and now kneel at its shrine, there to find strength in all the trials of life. It is the only means in this wide world which is able to bring comfort to the dying.

To be sure, the scenes which we shall view, the average person would not care to witness; for they lead up to the most cruel and barbarous death which could be visited upon any mortal, a death after the most atrocious and inhuman tortures had been inflicted. The flesh had been torn and bruised by the scourge, the head had been crowned with thorns, the human form is now thrown prostrate on a cross, with a sickening thud that cross with its human burden is thrown into the gaping hole prepared for its reception and there suspended on the cross, and the body is exposed for hours to the heat of a tropical sun. To be sure, it is sad and sickening, and yet — this narrative is "the sweetest story ever told." Why? Listen: —

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
  See Him dying on the tree;
'Tis the Christ by man rejected;
  Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He.

Christ, the Son of God and man, the embodiment and personification of love, of humble, self-denying, and self-sacrificing love, 'tis He who suffers and dies, 'tis He who has come to save that which was lost, Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King, who gave Himself as a ransom for many, in whose name alone there is salvation, whom God made to be sin for us — our great Redeemer.

This tragedy is of greatest importance to you; upon it depends your eternal destiny. Let us, then, during this present Lenten season, witness some of the scenes enacted in the Council and the judgment hall of Pilate, and on Calvary. May God the Holy Ghost open our eyes, so that we shall behold with the eyes of faith our great Redeemer as our text presents Him to us!

Our Redeemer Rejected by the Dignitaries of the Church.

Let us consider —

1. *The charge which led up to His rejection;*
2. *The rejection itself.*

1.

Relate briefly the events leading up to the narrative of our text: Christ's institution of the Last Supper, His suffering in Gethsemane, His betrayal and capture.

A) The religion of Jesus was a constant rock of offense to the Jews, especially to the spiritual leaders of the Church, and for three years they sought for a flaw in His speech or character, so that they might accuse Him before the spiritual and the civil court. It had been a foregone conclusion that Jesus should die, v. 59. Now that He was in their power, they were intent on not relinquishing their prey under any circumstances. Thus in the same night in which Jesus was betrayed and taken captive the Sanhedrin was called into session, and before this august body, composed of the dignitaries of the Church, Jesus was to be tried and sentenced, v. 57.

a) What was the Sanhedrin? It was a council composed of seventy members. Some give the number at seventy-two, but for this there appears no sufficient authority. To this number the high priest was added. From Matt. 16, 21; 26, 3; 27, 1 it is apparent that it was composed of priests, elders, and scribes. By the first-named are to be understood not such as had administered the office of high priests, but the chief men among the priests, probably the presidents of the twenty-four classes into which the priesthood was divided, 1 Chron. 24, 1—6. By the second group we are probably to understand the selectmen of the people, persons whose rank or distinction led to their being raised to this distinction. By the last-named are designated those who gave themselves to the pursuit of learning, especially to the interpretation of Scripture and of the traditions of the fathers. In this Council the office of president belonged to the high priest, and it was his prerogative to summon the Council as well as to preside over its deliberations. The meetings were held in the morning, in a hall close by the Great Gate of the Temple. In cases of urgency the Sanhedrin might be convened in the house of the high priest, Matt. 26, 3.

b) The functions of this Council consisted in settling questions of blasphemy, of Sabbath-breaking, and of heresy. In notices contained in the New Testament we find nothing that would lead us to infer that their powers extended beyond matters of a religious nature. On those guilty of acts forbidden by the Law they could pronounce the sentence of death, but under the Roman government they were not permitted to execute this sentence; their power terminated with the pronouncing of a decision and the transmission of this to the procurator, or governor, with whom it rested to execute it or not as he saw fit, John 18, 31; Matt. 27, 1. 2.

B) It was before this body of men that Jesus was brought to be tried. Caiaphas, the high priest, presided. What a picture! Here we have the shadow and the body itself. Caiaphas the type and Jesus, whom Caiaphas, as high priest, foreshadowed. Caiaphas should and might have known this, and it was his duty to proclaim publicly: This is indeed the Christ, the long-expected Messiah. But, instead, he, together with the other chief priests and elders and all other members of the Council, sought false witness against Jesus, v. 59. But they found none. How could they? For years they had sought testimony against Jesus, but even the sharpest, keenest, among them found none. However, enmity against Christ is not easily allayed, so they sought again. In vain. Shall all their efforts come to naught? Never! So they cast about for more witnesses. And, behold, they found two; but they, too, were false witnesses, perjurers.

Their testimony: v. 61. The charge they were aiming to establish was eminently one of conspiracy against a national institution, which with them was blasphemy, a crime coming under the same category as the claim of being the Messiah, or the Son of God. Anything that looked criminal would serve to give color to their malicious prosecution.

To these accusations Jesus said nothing, v. 62. He held his peace, not as one sullen and self-condemned, not because He did not know what to say or how to say it. No, He remained silent that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, Is. 53, 7. He was silent because His hour had come. He had been made sin for us. *He* was silent, but His *blood* was to speak.

C) a) However, the Sanhedrin soon saw that this procedure would bring them nowhere, and recourse must be taken to some other expedient. And thus, contrary to all laws and rules of justice, the judge of this ecclesiastical court, overcome with anger and terror, strode in the midst of the hall and said, "Answerest Thou nothing? What is it these witness against Thee?" But the silence of Jesus was unbroken.

b) Then v. 63. Ah, at last the question had been asked for which all had been waiting. And the answer came. Looking at the man who had lifted himself out of the crowd of aged and evil faces, Jesus replied, "I am," v. 64. And as proof for His statement He refers to His second coming, to His whole state of exaltation. The Sanhedrin probably looked upon Jesus with a scornful and disdainful smile when He said, "I am." A likely fellow, they thought, to be the Messiah who is to come in pomp and power! Without doubt it was this thought which Jesus read in their faces and hearts, and therefore He said: Though you see Me in this low and abject state and think it ridiculous for Me to call Myself the Messiah, nevertheless it is as I say, and the day is coming when I shall appear wholly different from what you are beholding now; hereafter, *arti, i. e.,* shortly, I shall be revealed as the Son of God. This prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled when he rose again on the third day and thus proved to all men that His confession before Caiaphas was not an idle boast, but the truth.

Terrible as this truth was to the Sanhedrin, it is comforting to us. Yes, how comforting to know that this very Jesus who stood before Caiaphas was and is the Son of God! Since that is true, also this is an assured fact, that we are redeemed; for the blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1, 7. Only if Jesus is the Son of God, is the wrath of God appeased and sin, death, and devil have been conquered and overcome. Cf. Ps. 49, 8. 9.

2.

What effect did the confession of Jesus have upon the Sanhedrin?

A) We read: v. 65. The high priest rent his clothes, a custom of the Jews, when they heard or saw anything that they regarded as a reproach to God. Caiaphas called the beautiful confession of Christ blasphemy. Picture the significance of the verdict. It stamped God the Father a liar, who had said: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It denied the assertion of the prophets: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel," *i. e.,* God with us, Is. 7, 14. It made a prevaricator of the angel of the Lord, Luke 1, 31—33. But Caiphas cared nothing about truth or justice; his only concern was to entrap Jesus, to induce Him to reassert His essential oneness with God, as he knew Jesus had done before, John 8, 58; 9, 35—37; 10, 30. Then the charge of blasphemy could be made and sustained with a show of justice, and the penalty would be death. And as Caiaphas had planned, so it came to pass. For no sooner had Jesus made his confession than we hear Caiaphas rage and say: "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" And they answered: "He is guilty of death."

B) The verdict had thus been given. Jesus, who had come to save, was rejected, rejected by those whose very purpose of existence was to proclaim Him as the Messiah and the Son of God.

C) Has the world changed? No. The dignitaries of the Church to-day, *i. e.,* those who are held in high esteem and are regarded as the spiritual leaders of the people, do the very same thing. Denying the infallibility of the Bible, denying the virgin birth of Christ, denying His divinity, etc., all this is nothing else than concurring in the verdict of the Sanhedrin. Modernists, Liberalists, are personified in Caiaphas.

Let them rave and rage. All their venom cannot overthrow the records of Scripture. "The Lord shall have them in derision." And the day is coming "when He shall speak to them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure," Ps. 2.

Blessed therefore all those who confess and believe that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, etc. (2 Art.) Only these will be able to stand in the Judgment of God on that great day.

RUD. H. C. MEYER.

Second Lenten Outline.

Luke 23, 1—3.

Jesus, our Redeemer, in whose mouth there was no guile and in whose soul there was not a shadow of a blemish, had made a beautiful and truthful confession when standing before the ecclesiastical court in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Such confession resulted in His rejection by the leaders of the Church. He was found guilty of death, the unanimous verdict of the Sanhedrin.

He who had healed so many, who had even raised the dead and brought them back to life, declared guilty of death by those who by virtue of their office should proclaim His power and glory. Imagine!

Oh, if they with their own hands could carry out the verdict, no greater joy and satisfaction would they crave. But this was not to be. The Sanhedrin was not empowered to execute the sentence of death; all this High Council of the Jews could do was to transmit its findings in the case to the Roman governor, who then would carry out the sentence or not, as he saw fit.

Thus our lesson for to-day presents to us the sorrowful spectacle of Jesus condemned, bound as a common criminal and culprit, in the midst of the representatives of the Church, led along the streets of Jerusalem in the early morning hours of that memorable Friday.

They wend their way to the seat of the Roman government, to the palace of Pontius Pilate. The degenerate Church, through its highest officials, had rejected Jesus, and now the civil government is to decide what shall be done with Him.

Here in the palace we hear —

Our Redeemer Indicted by the Church.

We shall consider —

1. The indictment, *2. The defense of Jesus.*

1.

V. 1. What a contrast! What a picture! On the judgment-seat the governor of a subjugated province; before him stands bound the Judge of the universe! Jesus led before a man now condemned to eternal infamy, Pilate. Who was this Pilate? The Roman governor of Judea; characterized as one having "a general desire to keep up the Roman tradition of judicial fairness, but lacking the necessary firmness and swayed by selfish considerations." He was a man who was cordially disliked by the Jews and who reciprocated with contempt and oppression.

A) The indictment, v. 2.

How circumstances alter cases! The charge upon which the Council had just sentenced Jesus to death was blasphemy, because He said He was the Son of God. Of this nothing is mentioned in their indictment before Pilate. How crafty and disgustingly dishonest the members of the Sanhedrin are! They knew well the court before which they stood and therefore preferred a charge that was in conformity with the circumstances. What did Pilate, a heathen, care about their religious squabbles! They were of no concern to him, and so they gave the case in hand a political aspect.

They put forth three counts on which they indict Jesus.

a) "We find this fellow perverting the nation"; *i. e.,* He is a disturber of the peace, whose object has been to institute an insurrection by trying to make the Jews dissatisfied and rebellious. These hypocritical liars! Nothing would have pleased them more, and nothing would have been more to their liking, than if Jesus had been what they accused Him of. Why had they been so antagonistic towards Him? Was it not because Jesus did not take a stand against the existing order of things? Nothing would have pleased them more than if Jesus would have instituted an insurrection for the purpose of throwing off the Roman yoke.

b) "Forbidding to give tribute unto Caesar." An equally base lie. Had He not publicly declared, when the question had been put whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar: "Give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's"? They themselves desired nothing more than this, that they might withhold their taxes from Caesar. Out of the fulness of their hearts their mouths spoke. But to accuse Jesus of such a thing was absurd, preposterous.

c) Making Himself a rival of Caesar, saying "that He Himself is Christ, a king." But the reason why they rejected Christ and would not own Him as the Messiah was that He did not appear with worldly pomp and power and did not set Himself up as a worldly prince nor offer to do anything against Caesar. Yet that very thing which they sought in Him they accused Him of.

B) How low the representatives of the Church stooped! They resorted to the lowest kind of lies to carry out their evil designs and intentions. However, let us not overlook the fact that Jesus Christ is our Substitute and that the indignities heaped upon Him by the members of the Sanhedrin He suffered for us.

By nature we all have a sinful heart. We are guilty of those very crimes Jesus was accused of. We rebelled not only against the powers ordained by God, but rather against the Ruler of the universe Himself, against God. When man fell into sin, he therewith instituted an insurrection against God, and of this sin we are all guilty. How often have we refused to give the tribute of gratitude and obedience to our Creator! How often have we paid homage to our own will and placed it upon the throne! For all this Christ had to suffer when He was falsely accused of being an insurrectionist, and thus He was obliged to restore that which He took not away," Ps. 69, 4. (Hymn 201, 4.)

2.

What defense did Jesus make?

A) V. 3. The point which most of all influenced Pilate was the accusation of the Jews that Christ had claimed to be a king. The other two counts were so obviously wrong that Pilate did not even deem it necessary to question Jesus regarding them. In fact, Pilate had only scorn for the Jewish complainants, and had he not been so lily-livered and afraid of losing his office and position, he would have dismissed the case for lack of evidence. But no, with at least some show of justice he investigates the last of the charges and asks, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Having been procurator for some time, he no doubt knew that the Jews were expecting a Messiah, who was to bear the title of a king. And to satisfy his own curiosity, he asks Jesus, Art Thou this King? Or probably, it was in utter amazement that he put the question. Describe the picture portrayed: Here is Jesus, pale, spent, weary, shackled, bound, taken captive by His own people. He claims kingship! Amazed at this caricature of royalty, Pilate asks: "Art Thou," you pitiable sight, "King of the Jews?"

B) V. 3b. To his astonishment Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it." Yes, indeed, He was the Christ and consequently a king, but not such a king as was ever likely to give any trouble to Caesar. His was not a temporal kingdom, but a spiritual one. When His followers would have made Him a king, John 6, 15, He escaped. St. John relates this incident in greater detail than Luke. See John 18, 37. From this passage it is evident that Jesus does not boast of a temporal kingdom which He was to establish; His, He intimates, is a spiritual kingdom. There is a vast difference between His kingdom and that of Caesar. Temporal kingdoms have man-made laws, which are enforced by brute force; Christ's kingdom has laws of divine origin, and they are enforced by love. Worldly kingdoms have jurisdiction over the life of their subjects, while Christ's kingdom claims jurisdiction over the *souls* of men. Worldly kingdoms number among their subjects good and evil, while Christ's kingdom boasts of sanctified people. Kingdoms of this world have their boundaries, while Christ's kingdom is universal; worldly kingdoms are maintained by the sword, while Christ's is maintained by the Word. Worldly kingdoms totter and fall, Christ's, however, is eternal. Despite the fact that Jesus claims kingship He is in no wise a rival of Caesar.

C) However, a question more important than the one Pilate asks of Jesus is another one, a question of greatest importance to mortal man, to you. It is this: Are you a subject in Christ's kingdom? Without doubt you are living in the most blessed country on earth; but the fact that you are a citizen of these our United States does not automatically make you a citizen and subject of Christ's kingdom. Unless you have been sanctified by faith, you are a stranger and foreigner in His kingdom. But believe in Christ, and you at once become a fellow-citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God.

In order that you may attain this stage, behold, Christ is now suffering and by suffering and dying is establishing His kingdom. May your confession always be: "that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom," etc.! Amen. RUD. H. C. MEYER.

Third Lenten Outline.

Luke 23, 13—15.

Jesus had been accused by the Sanhedrin of insurrection and treason. Pilate had examined Jesus very closely and found these charges unfounded, saying: "I find no fault in this man." However, this verdict had an ill effect upon the chief priests, and they feared that all their efforts would come to naught. They were determined to prosecute the case to the utmost; and when Pilate was unable upon investigation to confirm their charges, they were the more fierce, as the sacred records report, saying: v. 5. Hearing that Jesus came from Galilee, whither His parents had moved when He was still an infant, and where He had grown up to manhood, Pilate sent Him to Herod, Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee, who was spending the days of the Passover in Jerusalem. It was this Herod who had murdered John the Baptist. Pilate welcomed the opportunity to rid himself of a case which gave him so much concern and worry; for he did not have the moral courage to set Jesus free because of fear of the Jews. So to Herod Jesus went. Herod, we are told, was glad to see Jesus, as he had heard many wonderful things about Him, and he hoped Jesus would perform some miracle to gain his, Herod's, favor and thus win His liberty. However, Herod's curiosity was not to be satisfied this time. Herod questioned Jesus with many words, but Jesus answered not a word. Why should He? Any word uttered before Herod would have been "casting pearls before the swine and that which is holy unto the dogs."

Of course, the chief priests vehemently accused Jesus before Herod. With Pilate they had failed miserably; he would not be convinced of the justice of their charges; and thus, to gain their end with Herod, they talked themselves into a rage. But it was of no avail. And after mocking Jesus, putting a white robe on Him, probably a cast-off mantle of Herod, deriding and ridiculing Him, they sent Him back to Pilate. Herod's answer to the charges preferred against Jesus had been given in the white robe. It indicated that Herod considered Jesus a helpless, irresponsible fool, a mock king, a man to be laughed at and not to be feared and punished. And thus back to Pilate Jesus came, where the trial was resumed, with the result that

Our Redeemer was Declared Innocent by His Judge.

This verdict —

1. Glorifies Jesus; *2. Comforts sinners.*

1.

A) Pilate had attempted to get rid of the vexing case by sending Jesus to Herod. Herod returned the prisoner, and so Pilate was forced to continue the trial and finally terminate it. In Pilate's mind there was no doubt as to the innocence of Jesus. After careful examination of all charges he was fully convinced that nothing could be proved against Him. To this the words which he addressed to the chief priests and rulers of the people bear witness, vv. 14. 15. Once before Pilate had rendered this verdict: "I find no fault in Him at all." But now he augments his verdict by referring to Herod's decision. He therewith as much as told the plaintiffs that they were bearing false witness against Christ. Coward that Pilate was, the evidence in favor of Jesus' innocence was so overwhelming that he was forced to declare: "I find no fault in Him."

B) This verdict of Pilate certainly redounds to the glory and honor of Jesus. The chief priests and the rulers of the people surely left nothing undone and unsaid to induce Pilate to render an adverse decision, or verdict; but all their efforts were in vain, for the verdict read: Nothing worthy of death has been found. Such was the verdict of the Gentile judge Pilate and the verdict of the Idumean judge Herod. All charges proved false. As the sun finally penetrates the darkest and heaviest clouds and shines forth in all his brightness, so the innocence of Jesus here shines forth in all its splendor.

C) What took place in the palace of Pilate before the eyes of the priests and rulers of the people has been repeated in the course of centuries before the eyes of all who will not wilfully close their eyes. The satanic hatred of the Christ has never yet died out. Our Savior has not been spared the mockeries of Herod to this day. Man has scrutinized His words and His work, His life, His suffering and death, many books have been written against Him, declaring Him an impostor; among the learned and the wise, among the unlearned and unsophisticated, we hear blasphemies uttered against Him; His Gospel has been antagonized, even the sword has been employed against Him, and what has been effected? "Nothing has been found," such must be the verdict of all truth-loving men. What David confesses Ps. 51, 4 must be the confession of the Christian. His words and deeds, His life from His birth to His dying breath on the cross, remains unblemished and untarnished. Even in His greatest suffering, when pain and sorrow are very apt to tempt even the strongest child of God to do or say something sinful, He remained sinless. Job, who had been cast into the throes of sorrow caused by the loss of his whole family and all his property, cursed the day of his birth. Moses, the prophet like unto Christ, was seduced into doubt. When Jeremiah was persecuted, he, like Job, cursed the day of his birth. The suffering of Jesus, however, only set forth His innocence and purity in a greater and brighter light. Surely there was no lack of suffering of the soul in Jesus. His enemies hated Him, His disciples proved unfaithful, and yet His soul remained without a blemish; not a sinful word escaped His lips, not an unkind word was uttered by Him. He was obedient unto death, faithful in love towards friend and foe. Nothing sinful was found in Him. And thus it will always be. The lips that accuse Him will be silenced in death, the books written against Him will disappear and rot, but of Jesus all Christendom will sing to the end of days: "Nothing is found in Him," "O Lamb of God, most holy!" Yes, throughout eternity the elect will send forth the exultant strain: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

"Nothing is found in Him," such is the verdict of Pilate, and in this verdict all truth-loving hearts will concur.

This declaration of Christ's innocence, however, is of greatest comfort to all Christians, to all sinners.

2.

Pilate and Herod had found nothing worthy of death. Not a single charge could be substantiated. A double verdict of "Not guilty" by the proper authorities, and despite all Jesus was not released. Why not?

A) We may lay it to the indecision of Pilate. He was a man knowing the right and doing the wrong, not willing to do an act of manifest injustice if he can avoid it, but hesitating to prevent it for fear of a possibility that a charge may be placed against him, pitiable, vacillating, because his hands are tied by the consciousness of past guilt and personal danger.

B) But Pilate and Herod were but the instruments in the hands of another judge, whose justice cannot be questioned. This judge is God Himself. What? God, the Holy and Just One, guilty of such a deed? Yes, indeed! Must man not despair of and doubt the justice of God when he sees the innocent Jesus ill-treated? There is but one key to this seeming contradiction. Forget not that the man of Nazareth is our Redeemer; what He suffers He suffers not because of His own shortcomings; no, see Is. 53. "For us" — that is the key. "He was made to be sin for us," 2 Cor. 5, 21. Only in the light of these and similar passages of Holy Scripture can we understand the queer and unjust action of Pilate.

Hymn 205, 3—6. And the more efficient we grow in making such a confession, the better we shall be able to rejoice: —

Amazing goodness! love divine! etc. (Hymn 202, 5.)

RUD. H. C. MEYER.

Fourth Lenten Outline.

Matt. 27, 15—22.

God had chosen Israel to be His own people. As a seal of their election He had made with them the covenant of circumcision. He had favored them above all other nations: giving of the Law, promises of the coming Messiah. God's promises were not to fail. "The mountains shall depart," etc., Is. 54, 10. Israel reciprocated. Often in the history of Israel the chosen people of God were called upon to make an important decision. Thus when Moses returned from Mount Sinai and laid before them all that the Lord had commanded him, their decision was: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." When Joshua, at Shechem, said: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," etc., the people answered: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods!" Josh. 24, 15. 16.

In our text we hear of another decision Israel made, a decision the results and consequences of which are apparent to this day, a decision from which they have not recovered and never will recover, neither in time nor in eternity. The question by which they were confronted was: "Which of the two will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus?" Alas! ill did the Jews choose. "He came into His own, and they received Him not."

We sorrow over the fact that the chosen people of God in their blindness chose Barabbas and repudiated Jesus. We regret the fact that the Savior was made to suffer gross ingratitude at the hands of His own people. And yet it is true what we read Rom. 11, 12: "The Jews' fall has become the riches of the world." That fatal choice of the Jews means much to us Gentiles. Let us therefore consider the truth: —

Our Redeemer Repudiated by His Chosen People.

1. It is a sad fact;

2. But thus salvation is come to us Gentiles.

1.

A) Pilate, who was convinced of the innocence of Jesus, but feared the Jews and sought their favor, had been very much disappointed at the action of Herod. His scheme to rid himself of the responsibility of disposing of Jesus had failed. However, in his determination to free Jesus he embraces an opportunity which custom presented. It had been a custom of long standing that on the occasion of the Passover-feast some prisoner be released. Hoping that the Jews would ask for the release of Jesus, whom he had scourged to arouse their compassion and sympathy, he reminded them of this custom and gave them the choice between this scourged and pitiable Jesus and a notorious criminal by the name of Barabbas, who had committed robbery and murder and had been found guilty of sedition, a man who was vicious and opposed to all authority; he lived by robbery and by plying his nefarious trade had committed murder. It would have been a blessing for society had this man been put out of the way. The alternative was Jesus, who had proclaimed Himself as the Messiah and had adduced abundant evidence for his claim. He was known as a man who did only good, in whose mouth there was no guile. His enemies had been able to condemn Him only on the ground of manufactured evidence, a man whom both Pilate and Herod had found guiltless. Between these two the Jews were to choose. We may surmise that, had the people been left to themselves, they would never have made the choice they did; but they were subservient to their leaders, and the chief priests, together with their leaders, induced them to choose Barabbas. When Pilate emerged from the palace, he was greeted with the hoarse, tumultuous cry: Not this man, but Barabbas! What a choice! The Son of God is repudiated and rejected, and a man of sin is elected. To a person with but a minimum degree of sense of justice and decency this choice seems incomprehensible. Jesus, the great and willing Helper and Benefactor of the people, repudiated, and Barabbas, the active agent of tumult, whose hands were stained with the blood of his fellow-men, turned loose to continue his depredations!

B) How sad! But let us not too harshly condemn those men who were carried away by their passion. Let us examine ourselves. Before us stand Jesus and Barabbas. Who shall it be? Who is your choice?

In Xenophon's *Memoirs* there is a striking story told by Socrates, the story known as "The Choice of Hercules." Young Hercules, emerging from boyhood into manhood, is pondering how he is to shape his life. Two women appear before him, one voluptuous in form and luxurious in dress, the other severe and strict in mien and clothed in a simple white garment. The name of the one is Pleasure, the name of the other is Virtue. The one promises to lead young Hercules by the shortest road and without any toil to the enjoyment of every pleasure. The other beckons him along another path, a path where he shall meet with labors and suffering, but where alone he shall find a beautiful and good life worthy of his manhood. (*Ross.*)

Applications. — a) How often are you placed in a position where you must make a choice? The chosen people of God chose Barabbas and not Christ, and thus Jesus, though innocent, took the place of guilty Barabbas. So to this day. How often are good and evil, the righteous and unrighteous, the pure and the impure, Jesus and Barabbas, placed before us! Which will we choose? Or rather, which have we chosen in the inner tabernacles of the heart? God does not force Jesus upon any one, but Jesus woos us, He would be ours. Has He won your heart?

b) The Jews chose Barabbas and repudiated Jesus. So the world to-day; it has not changed an iota. Jesus draws near in His Word and Sacraments, but do not the majority repudiate Him? They fear He will interfere with their plans and ways of life. Many wish to be rid of Him for many reasons. Some wish to indulge in sins which cannot be enjoyed in His presence; the busy, active man, who lives for this world only, has no time to waste on religion; the thoughtless lover of pleasure, looking upon spiritual claims as something disturbing him in his various enjoyments and pleasures, feels no need of a Savior.

c) The Jews repudiated their only Savior and to this day are suffering the consequences of their ill-made choice. Bereft of their country, they are dispersed over the earth and branded with contempt. What a lesson!

d) To-day there stand before you Jesus and Barabbas; which is your choice? You once made a choice, on the day of your baptism and again on the day of your confirmation; it was then that you chose Jesus. Have you been true to your pledge? Are the haunts of wickedness and the places of sinful pleasure of whatever character a greater attraction to you than the place where God's honor dwelleth? Are you no longer able to say: "Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house," etc.? Oh, then you have chosen Barabbas, then you have repudiated your Savior. And what then? Remember the consequences of the Jews' choice. Your fate will be worse. The wrath of God will be upon you.

2.

However sad it is that the Jews repudiated Jesus, it is nevertheless true that *through their fall salvation has come to us Gentiles.*

The choice of the Jews resulted in the death of Jesus.

A) Step to the crest of the hill outside Jerusalem's city gate. On that sacred knoll are erected three crosses. Upon each hangs the form of a man. Our eye is riveted upon the cross in the center, for upon it hangs a man, haggard, pale, crowned with thorns, his face covered with bloody gore. Do you recognize Him? It is that very Jesus repudiated by the Jews in favor of Barabbas. Had it not been for Jesus, that cross would have borne the form of Barabbas. Yes, Jesus for Barabbas. Barabbas is but the representative of the whole human race, and thus we can truthfully say: Jesus for all. And if for all, then also for you, then also for me. In Barabbas we have been set free, free from the guilt and punishment of sin, freed without our own merit and worthiness; it is the gift of God. The Jews were but the instrument in the hand of God to carry out our salvation; for if ever the common saying that the voice of the people is God's voice was true, it was true in this instance. The choice of the Jews was God's choice; the Son of God was delivered up that Barabbas, *i. e.,* the whole sinful human race, might be released. Jesus for Barabbas, that is the literal interpretation of the words of the prophet: "The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." Jesus for Barabbas, that is the interpretation of 2 Cor. 5, 21.

B) And as Barabbas undoubtedly rejoiced when the people chose him and repudiated Jesus, so we, too, can now rejoice: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect," etc.? Rom. 8, 33. 34. Yes, indeed: Hymn 198, 5.

Application. — Therefore, if you have chosen Barabbas, *i. e.,* if you have chosen the ways of the world, if you are walking in the counsel of the ungodly and stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful (Ps. 1), in other words, if you have repudiated

Christ, remember, while there is life, there is hope. Repent and reject Him no more; now, while the sun of grace still brightens the horizon of sinfulness, go to Calvary and there at the foot of the cross once more make your choice and with a contrite and believing heart pledge: Hymn 88, 5.

And leaving the cross and arriving at your home, returning to every-day life, your motto shall be: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Rud. H. C. Meyer.

Fifth Lenten Outline.

Matt. 27, 24—26.

"Stricken, smitten, and afflicted," in these three words the whole Passion of our Lord is described. We have accompanied the Lord from Gethsemane to the court-room of the Roman governor. Here we find Him to-day. Pilate makes desperate attempts to free Jesus. Again and again he asserts the innocence of Jesus, declaring: "I find no fault in Him at all." Justice demanded acquittal. But in the heart of Pilate there lives an ungodly fear; malfeasance in office is his offense, and the resulting dismissal stares him in the face. A complaint from the Jews would bring about his downfall. This he must prevent, and he must preserve for himself the favor and the good will of the Jews. With him the end justifies the means. Persuasion had been in vain, appeal to the sympathy of the Jews by placing Barabbas and Jesus before them was of no avail. The Jews chose Barabbas. He was in a quandary; therefore the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" The bloodthirsty, fickle rabble and mob gave the answer, "Crucify Him!" And the cowardly, favor-seeking Pilate violated his trust, took water, washed his hands, as a symbol of his own innocence, and delivered Jesus into the hands of the Jews to be crucified. And thus we find —

Our Redeemer Condemned by the State.

Let us consider —

1. *Pilate's attempt to absolve himself of all culpability;*
2. *Lessons to be learned.*

1.

A) The whole trial of Jesus before Pilate smacks of injustice. Everything goes to show that Pilate was convinced of the absolute innocence of Jesus. All charges, of which there were three: 1. insurrection, 2. refusal to pay tribute, 3. being an aspirant to the crown of the empire, had proved to be false; not one of them, after close investigation and questioning, could be substantiated. The deeper Pilate went into the case, the more reason was discovered for resisting the importunity of the Jews, and no matter how he looked at the case, his plain duty was to set the prisoner free. Every sense of justice would demand such procedure. "Why, then, the perplexity of Pilate? we ask. The answer is suggested by the taunts of the Jews, John 19, 12: 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend.' Pilate foresaw that, if he resisted the will of the rulers of the Jews, he would make them his enemies and so provoke them to complain about him to the emperor, who could then institute an inquiry as to the administration of his office in general. And this he was not prepared to face. His past misdeeds had put him virtually into the power of those who were so eager for the condemnation of the Christ. His guilty conscience made him a coward at the very time when most of all he wanted to be brave." (*Taylor.*)

Thus ended Pilate's weak struggle with his conscience and with his sense of right, and he delivered Jesus to be crucified. "A fatal decision. He gained the favor of the Jews, but, alas! his name is pilloried forever as the man who delivered Jesus to the mob; his name has come down to posterity known only as the one who sentenced Jesus to the cross. Better a thousand times to have remained in obscurity." (*Miller.*)

B) Pilate took water and washed his hands to symbolize, — and he expressly said it, too, — that he was not responsible for Christ's death. But it was in vain. The water did not wash away one particle of his guilt. On him the final responsibility rested. No other man could have sent Jesus to the cross.

C) When the Jews heard the verdict, they rejoiced. At last their desires had been gratified. The hated Nazarene was to be no more. Willingly they shouldered the responsibility; gladly did they absolve Pilate from culpability and shouted: v. 25. To what an abyss had they fallen! And indeed, their declaration turned out to be a prophecy. Christ's blood did come upon them forty years later. Their Temple and their city were destroyed; they were led away into captivity and since then are dispersed over the earth, the only nation on earth without a country. Even to this day they are suffering under the curse of that hour in Pilate's court-room. They are universally regarded as a dishonest people. His full wrath God will reveal on Judgment Day.

2.

Lessons to be learned.

A) The story of Pilate is a striking illustration of what selfishness will do. Pilate sought his own safety; he sought to safeguard his own position and honor. There are many Pilates to-day. When selfishness has once dominated man, it will shut Jesus out. Examples: lodge-members. Why do so many refuse to leave the lodge although they are convinced in their own conscience that lodgery is antichristian? Answer: Political ambitions and promises of political support; sociability with men of reputation; insurance, etc. Another example: Many university graduates are Pilates. "Too much learning has made them dull." They cannot harmonize Christianity and the doctrine of Christ with science, and in our day it is science that counts with the world. Their reputation will be at stake if they still hold fast the truth of the Bible. And in their selfishness they discard Christ.

B) Pilate washes his hands in an attempt to absolve himself from all guilt. The same thing is done to-day. The Pilate-water is the excuse which is made: I can't see anything wrong in the lodge. God has given us our reason for a purpose; He does not expect us to believe doctrines of the truth of which we are not convinced. Ah, what a flimsy expedient of freeing oneself from responsibility by washing one's hands of guilt!

C) But why condemn Pilate and others? Look at your own hands; are they not stained with the blood of Jesus, with sins and shortcomings? Business sins, social sins, neglect in hearing God's Word, negligence in fulfilling one's duty as a church-member, withholding from God the things that are His, not contributing for church and synodical purposes, neglect of prayer and family worship. Pilate-water: No time, too busy, etc., does not cleanse them.

D) The Jews in their presumptuousness said they would shoulder the responsibility of Christ's death. "His blood be upon us and on our children." Terrible fulfilment forty years later. Sin always brings woe. — Application.

Conclusion. — Though we are guilty, yet there is salvation. Believe in Him who was delivered up for you. Make full confession as did the publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Forgiveness shall be yours.

RUD. H. C. MEYER.

Sixth Lenten Outline.

Luke 23, 33 a.

Pilate's verdict given and the sentence pronounced, the soldiers led Jesus away, along the road now known as the Via Dolorosa, to "that green hill far away outside the city gate," to Calvary. Here our text sets in and states: "There they crucified Him." Yes, "there they crucified Him"; more simply and plainly the sacred records could hardly have spoken. The tragedy enacted is too sacred. Human words cannot describe it, the human mind cannot comprehend it, cannot understand the significance of it all. "It is as high as the heaven and deeper than hell, what canst thou do and know? Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain to it." (*Stalker.*) "In the presence of such a subject one feels one's mind to be like some creature at the bottom of the sea — as incapable of comprehending it all as is the crustacean of scooping up the Atlantic in its shell." (*Stalker.*) The evangelist simply says: "There they crucified Him! These four words — what world of shame they express! and yet, how full of the most precious comfort they are! They give peace to the restless and sin-laden soul; they give life to the sinner dead in sin. Behold these words and the picture they portray with the eyes of faith, and you will be saved from the poisonous bite of sin, as were the Israelites bitten by the poisonous serpents in the wilderness when they looked up to the brazen serpent erected by Moses.

Let us, then, gather in spirit on that sacred knoll and there behold —

Our Redeemer Curcified by All Mankind.

Our text is very brief; it reads: "There they crucified Him." Let us consider each of these four words this evening.

1.

A) *"There* they crucified Him." Where? On Golgotha. The original word signifies "a skull," as does the Latin *calvaria,* our Calvary. Different conjectures have been made as to why the place was so termed. Many have held that Golgotha was the place of public execution and that for this reason it was called "the place of the skull." Another opinion is that the place took its name from its shape, being a hillock formed like a human skull. (Personally the writer inclines to this latter opinion.) So far as we know and have searched, there is no historical evidence to show that there was a place of public execution where Golgotha is commonly fixed. The context seems to show that the Roman guard hurried Jesus away and put Him to death at the first convenient spot, and that rather because there was no small fear of a popular uprising. But no matter what Golgotha has been or where it was located, all this makes little difference to us. The fact is that Jesus was crucified "there."

B) Golgotha is the center of all things, the meeting-place of two eternities. "The streams of ancient history converge here, and here the river of modern history takes its rise." Calvary, or Golgotha, how were the eyes of the great men of the Old Testament strained to see this place, — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and all the prophets! And now the eyes of all look back to it.

C. Golgotha — for untold numbers the portals to eternal life, for many the gate to eternal damnation.

2.

The second word of our text is "They."

A) Who are "they"?

a) The Roman guard under the command of the centurion, who, again, was under orders of the Roman governor Pilate. Representatives of the Gentile nation, unbelievers, children of this world.

b) Instrumental in his death were the chief priests, the rulers of the people, the scribes, and, above all, Caiaphas, the high priest, representatives of the Church, representatives of the chosen people of God. Consequently Jew and Gentile, Church and State. People vested with power and authority, people belonging to all classes, the rabble and the mob. 'Tis true, the act of crucifixion was done by rough, ignorant soldiers, but representatives of all parties had contributed in bringing Jesus to the cross.

B) If those who brought Jesus to the cross were but the representatives of both State and Church, then they were your representatives; for even though you do not belong to the Church, you belong to the State; and even though we do belong to the Church, our hands are stained with His blood.

Yes, "they" crucified Him. Why pass over that pronoun so lightly? Stop a moment and consider. Why not read it correctly and say: There *we* crucified Him? You and I. "It was my transgression which brought this woe on Thee." (Hymn 201, 4. See also 205, 3—5.) Cf. Acts 2, 23; 2 Cor. 5, 19; Is. 53; 43, 24 b.

What did we do? The third word of our text tells us: "crucified."

3.

A) Describe crucifixion. "Lay down the cross upon the ground, you who are appointed to this unenviable task. Stretch Him upon it. Now place the arms, extended, on the cross-beam. Here the nails and the mallet! More awful than the sound of falling clods upon a coffin lid, hear those blows, one after another, as the nails crush their way through tendon and bone in the palms of the hand, where meet and cross all the sensitive nerves that run from the fingers up the arms. What utterly indescribable torture He suffers! Place the feet now, one upon the other, the sole of the one foot flat upon the main beam; and with another large nail, forced down with heavy strokes, fasten them to the wood! Then lift up the cross; let it slip down into the hole that was dug to receive it, with a jar that hurls the body upon the pin that is to serve as a torture seat, while every muscle is wrenched and strained until it would seem that agony would drive him mad." (*Miller.*) It was maliciousness that stooped so low. Bad enough to condemn Jesus, who had only blessed and alleviated pain and suffering, but to crucify Him is beyond description. In the sight of God he that hangs on the cross is cursed. Gal. 3, 13; Deut. 21, 23.

B) Jesus is being crucified to-day.

It is the penalty of sin He is suffering, the penalty of the world's sin, the penalty of your sin, 2 Cor. 5, 21. Those who wilfully sin, those who reject His vicarious suffering, those who resist the Gospel, are driving the nails through His hands and feet and are crucifying Him anew. What base ingratitude! Why? Because it is Jesus, the Savior of mankind.

We now come to the last word of our text — "Him."

4.

A) "Him." Who is it? Look to the superscription of that center cross on Calvary. There you read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

a) Jesus of Nazareth, at whose birth the messenger of God said: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a *Savior*, which is Christ the Lord."

b) That same Jesus who by word and deed revealed himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.

c) That same Jesus who just a few hours before had made that beautiful confession before Caiaphas that He was the Son of God.

B) The God-appointed Redeemer, Gen. 3, 15, who was to bruise the serpent's head and undo the sin of Adam and Eve.

C) The Messiah, for whom the saints of old sighed and waited, Ps. 14, 7; Gen. 49, 18.

However, Jesus of Nazareth was not crucified in vain. Knowing that all Scripture had been fulfilled, He cried out, "It is finished." The work for which He had come into the world was completed in every detail; consequently we are now redeemed, God's wrath has been appeased, He is reconciled to the sinner. The gulf between God and the sinner has been removed, heaven's gate is ajar; enter in.

RUD. H. C. MEYER.

Maundy Thursday.

Matt. 26, 17—30.

We are in the season of Lent, known to us Lutherans also as Passiontide, and we devote this season to an intensive study of the Passion, or the sufferings of our Lord.

Maundy Thursday, however, is an exception, in the sense that it is not a day of sad, but of glad memories, a day for thanksgiving and not for lamentations. Hence the second Sacrament is also termed the Eucharist, indicative of thanksgiving.

The designation Maundy Thursday is a corruption of the Latin mandatum, command, alluding to John 13, 14.

The old Church called Maundy Thursday the birthday of the Eucharist. Let to-day's theme therefore be: —

The Birthday of the Eucharist.

We note —

1. *The circumstances leading up to the institution of the Eucharist;*
2. *The Eucharist in its nature and purpose.*

1.

V. 17. "The first day of the feast of unleavened bread," the Passover, began on Thursday evening at sunset. Prior to this all leaven and leavened bread was to be removed from the houses and premises, Lev. 23, 6; Deut. 16, 5. 6. 8. They could "make ready" without much trouble, for the inhabitants of Jerusalem furnished the accommodations. The "passover" means the paschal lamb, slain before the setting of the sun. V. 18. "Such a man," Ruth 4, 1; 1 Sam. 21, 2. The name of the host for special reasons is not given; even the house (address) is not indicated by the Lord, but the two disciples, Peter and John, were given special directions, Mark 14, 13; Luke 22, 7—13. The Lord in keeping name of host and place secret prevented Judas from disturbing the gathering by premature betrayal. The occupant of the house, by his prompt compliance, showed himself in sympathy with the Lord. He knew who "the Master" was.

"My time is at hand." This evidently means more than a reference to the calendar day, which would have been superfluous; it implies that the days of His sufferings would coincide with the Passover season. The original for "time" (*kairos*) often indicates a proper, fitting, opportune period, Luke 21, 8; John 7, 8. The time of His death is fast approaching, and His followers are again forewarned.

In keeping the Passover, Christ showed again that He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, yea, "to fulfil all righteousness," Matt. 3, 15. 19. The occupant of the house conducted them to "a large upper room furnished and prepared," Mark 14, 15, with tables and couches; thither the disciples brought the lamb "roast with fire," the "bitter herbs," Ex. 12, 8, unleavened bread, and what else may have been needed.

We note that the large upper room (securing privacy) was fittingly furnished and well adapted. For the observance of the Sacrament no appointments are too good, no altar service too dignified or impressive.

V. 21. But when at meat now for the last time with the Twelve, the Lord had to expose to what in His sacerdotal prayer He already referred in deep anguish, John 17, 12. How hell must have grinned at this humiliation of Christ and the Eleven, and how the angels must have wept! John said He "was troubled in spirit," John 13, 21. "One of you," "one of the Twelve," v. 14, not a stranger, but a "familiar friend," Ps. 41, 9. *Sin,* how quickly this weed develops, how atrocious the crimes it may mature!

V. 23. The disciples, shocked and dumbfounded, asked, every one, "Is it I, Lord?" It was well for each disciple to search his heart for the seeds of denial and betrayal. It is well for us to do the same. "Out of the heart proceed," etc., Matt. 13, 19. "Let a man examine himself," 1 Cor. 11, 28. The Judas incident is given us not as an occasion for saying, "God, I thank Thee," etc., Luke 18, 11.

V. 23. According to the usage of the times the head of the family or gathering dipped a morsel of unleavened bread into the dish of broth containing dates and figs, besides bitter herbs, Ex. 2, 8, and gave it to guests in turn, and so Jesus now handed the "sop," John 13, 26. Perhaps Judas had not heard the conversation between John and Jesus, John 13, 23; but in his hardness of heart and persistent hypocrisy he chimed in with the rest, saying, "Is it I?" v. 25. V. 24. The "Son of Man" is but another phrase for the Messiah, and of Him the Old Testament has not only written, but also given types and symbols in abundance.

Woe unto the betrayer. Though Christ's betrayal had been foretold as a part of His humiliation, anguish of soul, and identification as the promised Messiah, this by no means coerced Judas into the act. Each man is responsible for his acts. "It had been good," etc. The Lord is using Oriental phraseology in depicting the highest degree of misery. See Job 3, 3 ff.; Jer. 15, 10; 20, 14. Some Bible students believe that Judas, being exposed, now left the room, John 13, 27. This may also explain the effrontery with which he puts the question.

2.

V. 26. We now come to the institution of the Sacrament of the Altar. What do we mean by a Sacrament? Catechism, 269. We have but two Sacraments, not seven. "Jesus took bread," the unleavened bread prepared for the paschal meal in broad flat cakes, 2 Sam. 6, 19; Gen. 18, 6. "And blessed it." So, too, the cup was blessed, "and gave thanks," v. 27; 1 Cor. 10, 16. Equivalent to our consecration. Cp. 1 Sam. 9, 13. "And brake it"; owing to its peculiar crisp form, like our cracker, it could not be cut. Cp. chap. 14, 19; 15, 36; Acts 27, 35; Lam. 4, 4. We to-day do not break the bread, but use the wafer. To hold that the bread must be broken in order to symbolize the breaking of the Lord's body is a wrong view. Indeed, of our true Paschal Lamb it was declared, "A bone of Him shall not be broken," John 19, 36. See Ex. 12, 46; Num. 9, 12; Ps. 34, 20. The early Christians also used bread which did not admit of being cut. Cf. 1 Cor. 10, 16.

"Take, eat." An actual partaking must take place if we are to be recipients of the blessings peculiar to the Sacrament. We have here more than a mere commemoration of a past event. "This is My body." Catechism. Augs. Conf., Art. 10. The Lord does not say, This *bread* is My body, which might lend color to the wrong doctrine of the Roman Church — transubstantiation. The pronoun "this," in form and termination, does not refer to bread. So the meaning can only be, This which I now give unto you is My body. The glorified body and blood of Christ form a "communion," 1 Cor. 10, 16, with the bread and the wine in the Sacrament. The bread and the wine remain unchanged, 1 Cor. 11, 27. And by partaking we enter into the closest possible union with Christ, 1 Cor. 10, 16 ff. To merely make the elements *typical* of the Lord's body and blood, would again introduce the "shadow," Col. 2, 17; Heb. 9, 9; 10, 1.

V. 27. "After the same manner also," Luke 22, 20; 1 Cor. 11, 25. "Drink ye all of it." To withhold the cup from the communicants is a Roman arrogance, since we here have a distinct *command* and also the reason given, v. 28, "*for* this is My blood." And, again, a failure to partake of the cup or failure to grant it is also a failure to profess faith in the plain words of Christ and hence constitutes a denial, for it is the blood of the new testament — and should stand, Heb. 9, 15—17.

The old covenant, or testament, is delineated fully, Heb. 8—10, and dates back to Deut. 5, 2. Jehovah was to be the God of the Israelites, and they were to serve Him alone, Ex. 19, 5—8; Deut. 4, 23. This was to foreshadow the covenant of the new and better testament promised Jer. 31, 31 ff.; Ezek. 37, 26, and depicted, Gal. 3 and 4, as being a covenant of grace and truth, John 1, 17.

V. 28. "Shed for many for the remission of sins. "In olden times covenants were ratified by the shedding of blood, Gen. 15, 8—18. Moses, the mediator of the first covenant, sealed it by the shedding of blood, Ex. 24, 6—8. See Heb. 9, 18 ff. But the blood of animals could not cleanse from sin, Heb. 9, 13. 14; 10, 4; Hymn 319. Therefore Christ says, "This is *My* blood. 1 John 1, 7. "Shed for *many*." The Greek word "many" frequently refers to all mankind, describing it with respect to number, Matt. 20, 28; Rom. 5, 15. 19. So the blood of Christ is shed for *all* for the remission of sins. What a glorious message! We have sins of omission and commission; indeed, "we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment." However, the blood of *God* assures a full atonement. By this testament, sealed with the blood of the Lamb, the pardoned sinner is created heir to all spiritual blessings in this life and in the life to come.

Shed *for us*. Our blood should have been shed, for sin had entered the world, separated man from God, and introduced death, Rom. 5, 12; Jas. 1, 15. Nothing need now be done on our part but accept the full remission of sins. It is a free gift; the word remission, forgiveness, already implies that.

Partaking of the Sacrament is also a public confession and demonstration of our faith and certainly presupposes a walk in harmony with this. 1 Cor. 11, 26: "As often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye do show (proclaim, *verkuendigen*) the Lord's death till He come."

Conclusion. — V. 29. The Lord is alluding to His near departure. To-day's communion may be *our last*. Shall we drink it anew with Him in His Father's kingdom of glory? The seer was told, "Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He saith unto me, These things are the true sayings of God." Rev. 19, 9. Amen. A. W. MEYER.

Good Friday.

Luke 23, 39—53.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be Thine!

To-day we stand on Calvary. We are witnesses of the death and burial of the Son of God and Son of Man. Enemies of the Christ swarm around His cross. To them the Crucified is an object of hatred, scorn, and contempt. But friends, too, are there and speak words of praise and perform deeds of kindness and love. To them this Jesus is the King of their soul and the Lord of their life.—What is our relation to this dying Galilean King? May we be numbered among the friends of the Crucified who without Him do not care to live and without Him could never dare to die! Let us study the words and actions of the friends of Jesus whom we meet on Calvary to-day and thereby test our friendship to the Crucified.

Friendship's Test on Calvary.

1. *Do we feel our need of Jesus?*
2. *Do we in faith realize the blessings of His life and death?*
3. *Do we in love dedicate our life to His service?*

1.

Enumerate the friends of Jesus at the cross. They all felt their need of Him, the Savior.

The malefactors needed a friend. They had but a few more hours to live, and then they must face the eternal, holy, and just Judge. However, even in the face of death many men do not realize their supreme need of the Savior, but face the great change with curses and words of blasphemy upon their lips, v. 39. How sad!

But the malefactor to the right comes to a realization of His soul's dire need. Black is the record of his past life, and the heinousness of his guilt appears to him in all its ghastly color. He acknowledges the justice of the sentence which the law of the land has pronounced upon him. A due reward of his deeds he calls his painful crucifixion. Fear takes hold of him, fear of a just God, fear of eternal wrath and punishment. To whom can he look in the hour of greatest need but to Jesus, the sinners' Friend, whom God in infinite love gave to the world and even now was delivering on the cruel cross for sinners such as he?

Do we not sing of the fountain filled with Immanuel's blood:—

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my guilt away?

Is this eloquent and poetic exaggeration of your guilt? Proof that it is not.

Application of Law. Come down, you proud of heart, you "respectable" sinners, to the level of this thief. We all need the Savior's friendship and pardon as badly as did the dying malefactor.

All classes of men need the Christ. The sinner in his agony of a guilty conscience, the soldiers (centurion) in the face of death, the common people in their daily routine and drudgery of work, the children of sorrow and woe (women of Galilee), the men of erudition, wealth, and earthly power (Joseph of Arimathea), — all need the pardon, hope, strength, comfort, intellectual and soul-satisfaction which the Christ of God has to give. Do *we* realize our need of Jesus?

Understanding of our need of the Savior is the first test of friendship to the Christ. For if we imagine that we can dispense with the Savior's gifts of grace, we shall not crave the Savior's friendship nor be anxious to be His friends.

Feeling our need of Jesus, then, is a necessary condition of soul to keep us at the Savior's side.

2.

The malefactor's friendship was not only grounded in a sense of need of the Savior, but also in a glorious assurance of help from the Redeemer.

He beheld the snow-white innocence of this man, v. 41. He confidently expected a word of mercy from the lips of Him who had interceded for the soldiers that had hammered the holy body upon the cross. He asks: v. 42. In love the Lord should remember him when He would come in glory and majesty. And with what rapturous faith, think you, did the malefactor drink in the Savior's words of glorious hope! V. 43. These words spelled pardon, peace, and heaven for the believing malefactor. He looked to Jesus for all blessings in heavenly places and was satisfied.

And why should he not? For the innocent Jesus was dying for the guilty. The mysterious darkness which wrapped the earth in mourning was but symbolic of the darkness which had settled upon the Redeemer's soul. God had forsaken His Son and given Him to taste the pains of eternal death because of the world's iniquities that were resting upon Him, Matt. 27, 46. But Christ suffered not in vain. The rending of the veil in the Temple was proof of the fact that our great High Priest had opened a way for sinners into the Holy of Holies not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Now that the High Priest of the New Testament had brought His sacrifice, no more sacrifice was necessary. Sin was atoned for, justice satisfied, the divine wrath appeased, heaven opened. With joyous heart the Savior commended His spirit into His Father's hand and died with the cry of victory on His lips, "It is finished!"

Certainly, then, let us as friends of Jesus glorify God with the centurion, in joyous faith be certain that this righteous Man has died for the unrighteous, with the people smite upon our breasts in true repentance, return to our homes in true faith, assured that by this one sacrifice Jesus has perfected forever them that are sanctified, with the women of Galilee feel loath to leave the presence of Him whom we have followed these many years and who has never yet disappointed our hopes, and with Joseph of Arimathea be certain that this Jesus is the Christ, the King of Israel, in whose kingdom we are blessed. Let the voices of mockery heap scorn upon the cross, and let self-righteous men reject the blessings of His vicarious death, we, as true friends of Jesus, will remain firm in our trust that through His vicarious, holy life and innocent suffering and death we have peace with God, comfort in affliction, and in death the assurance of immortality and endless bliss. If this is your heart's faith in the Christ and your soul's sentiment toward the Crucified, then you are a friend of Jesus.

3.

True friends are loving friends and are happy to express their love in service.

Friendship's test on Calvary is therefore also a test of loving service.

Even in the few remaining moments of his life the repentant malefactor served Jesus, his Friend. He rebuked his fellow-sinner. He confessed the Savior. Does our loving friendship to Jesus bear the same fruits?

A like proof of friendship is given by the centurion, v. 47. Even in the company of those rough soldiers who had played their game of dice beneath the Savior's cross and had pierced the heart of Jesus with their taunts and gibes, the centurion, the captain of these carnal men, glorified God and confessed Jesus to have been an innocent man and the Son of God. Are we willing to run the risk of ridicule and confess Christ in the midst of His avowed enemies? While men gamble, dance, and play, do we sing the praises of Him who died that we might live? While men seek the pleasures of this world, do we seek the glory of our Christ? Let us with the people smite upon our breasts and bow our heads in shame at our frequent cowardice and weakness and return to our homes with the sacred vow in our hearts that with the help of our heavenly Friend we will be more ready to confess our Savior's name and stand up for the glory of His person and His work, even in this crooked and perverse generation. With the women of Galilee let us stand at the Savior's cross, without a word of apology for our friendship to the Christ and for the hope which is ours in Him.

If it is a severe test of love to stand up for Jesus in the presence of the wordly-minded, sin-serving, pleasure-mad children of the world, it is doubly hard to confess this Jesus and His truth before men of station and power, of education and wealth. Joseph of Arimathea stood this test of friendship, v. 52. We thank Joseph for this act of courage and love. During the Savior's life, Joseph was a secret friend of Jesus. At His death he boldly bares his friendship to Jesus before Pilate, the skeptic, and before the scoffing intellectuals, members of the Sanhedrin, who, he knew, would hear of his deed of love to Jesus. — Application. Will we cower before modern doubting rationalism and learning and apologize for our faith in the Biblical Jesus, for our trust in His atoning blood, for our confidence in His never-failing help, for our Christ-given principles of a godly life, for our hope of endless life in His eternal home?

Joseph's loving and generous hands buried our Savior. We cannot bury our Christ. He is risen and lives forevermore. But what are we doing for His kingdom?

Friends, to-day at Calvary we have applied friendship's test. May the test have made us vividly conscious of our need of the heavenly Friend! May it have strengthened our faith in the dear Redeemer, heightened our appreciation of His work, deepened our love to Him, and caused us to rededicate our lives to the service of our Lord! As friends of Jesus may we live, as friends of the Christ at death commend our souls to the Father's keeping, and as friends of the Savior at last be with Him in the mansions of glory forevermore!

W. Hohenstein.

Ascension Day.

Luke 24, 50—53.

Ascend, dear Lord!
   Accept Thy blood-bought crown!
Return to that blest land
   From whence Thy love hath caused Thee
      to come down;
Reign at Thy Father's hand.
Exalted Savior, naught can sever
Thee from the right to rule forever.
Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
   Ten thousand harps are strung
In Salem's palace-hall.
   The triumph song of victory is sung,
The Father's love doth call
Thee to His bosom, Lamb victorious!
Earth, echo back the angels' chorus:
"Ascend, dear Lord!" *Songs of the Church-year.*

Easter, the day of Christ's resurrection, is a day of rejoicing and jubilee. And rightly so. For the resurrection of Christ is a glorious fact, full of comfort and strength. But none the less is this day a day of exultation and praise. For the day of the Lord's ascension is the day of our Lord's coronation, of His triumphant entry into the royal palace of heaven, there to be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords and to reign with endless glory as the King of Grace and the Helper of His people.

Verily, Christians ought to celebrate the day of the Lord's ascension with no less splendor and joy than that with which they commemorate the Lord's resurrection on Easter Day. Every one who has been baptized into the name of Christ and is numbered among His people ought this day to come with rejoicing into the sanctuary of his God and with even greater joy leave the Lord's temple. The anthems of praise ought to swell to the heights of rapture, the organ to sound forth melodies of triumphant procession, the congregation to unite with the songs of heaven in singing of the Lord's victorious entry into glory. The lips of the messenger of God ought to feel the impulse which a great message inspires; the minister of Christ ought to wish that with a flaming tongue of fire and with angelic sweetness and with divine power he could proclaim to the assembled congregation the blessed meaning of this day of triumph and victory.

The Triumphant Christ.

1. Triumphant in His work of redemption;
2. Triumphant in the hearts and lives of His believers.

1.

Jesus had appeared to His disciples at various times and on different occasions for forty days after Easter. He had given them proofs of His resurrection, had rebuked them because of their unbelief, given them instruction concerning the kingdom of God, commanded them to preach the Gospel in the whole world, comforted them in view of the enmity of the world and the woes of this life, and given them the assurance that the preaching of His Word, the Gospel, among men would be attended with success. Now the time of His departure had come. Jesus led His disciples out to the Mount of Olives in plain view of the village of Bethany. The place is significant. He had taken them to this secluded spot some days ago on a mission of sadness. Here, in the Garden of Gethsemane, hard by the Mount of Olives, His Passion had begun. The Mount of Olives was to be also the place of His glorification. It had been a battle-field. Now it was to be a place of triumph. From Olivet He had gone to the depths of His humiliation. From the Mount of Olives He was to go to the heights of His exaltation. From here He had descended into the Valley of Bacah; from the same hallowed spot He was to ascend into the heaven of heavens.

He lifted up His hands in blessing upon His disciples. And with hands uplifted in blessing His body ascended higher and higher. With enraptured eyes the disciples gazed upward and watched their Master's upward rise. At last a cloud took the Lord from the sight of His people. In the company of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, the Conqueror entered into the heavenly Jerusalem to receive the acclaim of the heavenly hosts and to be crowned by His heavenly Father as the Lord of all.

A wonderful story, a wonderful spectacle — Christ in triumph! After His humiliation, His suffering and pain, His crucifixion and death, Christ is taken up into heaven and thus is far removed from all the imperfections, persecutions, and woes of this earth. But this is not the main reason for our rejoicing. He who ascends is our Jesus, our Savior, our Substitute, our Representative, our Brother. For us, for our redemption, He left the throne of glory and came to earth. For us, for our benefit, He is again received into the Father's glory. See in Christ therefore always, and also on this festival day, your Redeemer, your Representative. His triumph is your triumph; His glory, your glory; His heaven, your heaven; His ascension, your ascension.

We know the purpose of Christ's incarnation. By His vicarious life and sin-atoning death He was to free us from the mountain load of our sins and deliver us from the condemnation and curse of the Law, the clutches of the devil, and the bondage of the fear of death. Our High Priest was to bring one sacrifice and through it pay for the sins of the world. Our David was to meet the mighty Goliath and slay him in a bloody battle. Our Brother was to tread alone the winepress of God's wrath and appease this wrath. Our Friend was to plunge Himself for our sakes into the jaws of death and overcome the Prince of Terror by the power of His endless life.

But what proof have we that Christ has successfully defeated the enemies of our soul, sin, Satan, death, and hell? What proof that God really is reconciled to us and that paradise has been regained for sinful mortals? First we will point you again to Christ's resurrection. When Jesus arose from the dead and was brought back to life by the glory of the Father, Christ's work was vindicated, redemption sealed, incontrovertible proof given by Heaven itself that sin was atoned for, righteousness procured, hell defeated, death crushed, Satan robbed of his armor, and life and immortality brought to light. Our Easter Day saw all the enemies of the Christ lie vanquished at the risen Savior's feet. And they were never to rise again. Christ was never again to die. He died unto sin once, but what He now liveth He liveth unto God. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed forever and ever.

But greater proof of the Savior's successful work is given. Today we see the risen Jesus carried up into heaven. God the Father opens heaven's portals to take our Savior in. Our Redeemer enters through the gate of heaven as through a triumphal arch and holds His victorious entry into heaven. The angels of God do Him homage, fall down at His feet, and adore Him, and the Father gives His Son, as a trophy of triumph and victory, a place at His own right hand and places into the hands of the Son of Man the scepter of heaven and gives to our Brother might and dominion over all the world and the lordship over the Church, Eph. 1, 20—23; Ps. 110, 1. The Father would not have received our Savior into heaven if Jesus had not completely atoned for sin and vanquished hell and death. The Head once crowned with thorns would not have been crowned with the Victor's heavenly diadem, had Christ not overcome all His foes. Jesus came to the doors of heaven and demanded entrance on the ground of His bloody strife and complete satisfaction, and place was readily granted unto Him. Verily,

> Lord of battles, God of armies,
> He hath gained the victory.

Oh, heaven held jubilee when our Emmanuel returned from earth to heaven. The angels touched the harps and angel choirs in thousand tongues sang hallelujahs to our King.

Shall earth remain silent? Up, then, psalter and harp! Rise from the dust, ye sinners; shake off your sackcloth and ashes, ye mournful and sad at heart; stand upright, ye dwellers in the shadow of death, and rejoice over your *triumphant Christ* and go forth and live the *triumphant life.*

2.

On bended knees the disciples worshiped the ascended Jesus as the glorified Lord and heaven-attested Savior and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Why fear the power and wrath of the enemies? Jesus, the living Lord, was now the ascended, almighty, omnipresent Ruler of the earth, present to comfort and to cheer, to help and to deliver. Also according to His human nature the Christ of God had now entered into the full use of His divine power and majesty to rule and fill all things, but especially to guard and protect His beloved Church and children. In His house, the Temple, the disciples dwelt continually. There they sought the blessings of the ascended Lord and waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Their whole life was a life of praise of God. The triumphant Christ triumphed in their lives in spite of all sin and sorrow and made them more than conquerors in the midst of persecution and in the face of grim death, Luke 24, 47. 48; Mark 16, 20; John 16, 22—24; Acts 5, 41; Gal. 2, 20; Rom. 8, 31—39; Phil. 4, 13. After a triumphant life, led in the strength of the triumphant Christ, was to come for them the triumph of heaven, 2 Cor. 5, 1 ff.

To this day the ascended Lord is triumphant in the hearts and lives of His believers. Those who were dead in trespasses and sins and had been held captive by the Prince of Darkness are quickened together with Christ and raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. 2. Faith is a triumph of

Christ's grace in the hearts of men. When Saul was changed to Paul, Jesus had recorded a glorious triumph. And when a sinner is turned from his wicked ways, the power of ignorance is broken, the steel fetters of sin are loosed, and the sinner, in the ecstasy of faith and love, worships Jesus as his Lord and King, Helper and Friend, the ascended Jesus has again triumphed through the power of His Word.

Has not the ascended Lord sent His Spirit into our hearts and through His Word held triumphant entry into our souls and lifted our hearts in worship toward Himself, the heaven-enthroned Christ? Have we not by the Spirit been convinced of the deity of Jesus and the truth of His Gospel? We worship Him as our God and Savior and look up to His heaven as our home; and this triumphant faith in the ascended Jesus is our source of triumph over the doubt and skepticism, the fierce unbelief and open godlessness, of the rampant infidelity and immorality, of these days, 1 John 5, 4.

And the triumph continues throughout our earthly lives and fills our days with joy and songs of praise to God, 2 Cor. 2, 14.

Would sin cause us to fear? We will not despair. In the joy of the Christ-worshiping faith we will lift up our eyes to Him who has been taken up into heaven and say: "Sin, you have been conquered! You shall not again bring me into subjection. Through Christ you are my captive, and I will give you battle and lead a heavenly, holy, useful life." Would the Law condemn us? We will not bow to its sentence of condemnation and not heed its curses, but listen to the verdict of the ascended Lord, whom we worship; and that sentence reads: "Grace, mercy, pardon!" Would Satan through the woes and troubles of life tell us, "God is your enemy"? We will laugh him to scorn. Christ, taken up into heaven, proclaims in the sanctuary: Rom. 8, 28. If death endeavors to strike terror into our heart, we will not fear. In the sanctuary of God we hear the hymn of triumph: 1 Cor. 15, 55—57. Verily, the Christian life of worshiping faith is the triumphant life. Worshiping Jesus as our God and glorified Savior, we triumph in happy faith over sin, over Satan, over sorrow, over death and hell, and our gloomiest days of inward agony and outward affliction are made happy and are filled with victorious hymns of praise to God.

In the temple of God, Jesus appears to His people and blesses them with strength for battle and for victory over all foes. In His Word we see His face, full of grace and truth. His smile enlightens, cheers, and charms His people. His power cares for us, shields and protects us. In His house our lips are touched with hymns of praise and blessing to our God, and we are sent into the Jerusalem of this world with joy and peace, a peace which the world cannot know, a peace which keeps our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus in the midst of all the sorrow and sadness, the conflict and strife, of this world.

Thus the gracious eye of the ascended, ever-living, ever-reigning Christ is directed upon the people of this earth to convert those who are not yet sheep of His fold, to restrain the power and murderous designs of the enemies, to keep us, who are His in the faith, in the worship of His name, and to keep our hearts filled with spiritual joy and our souls abounding in hymns of praise and our lives triumphant over sin, sorrow, and death.

Dispute who will the Savior's reign,
Our Christ the Victor doth remain.

W. Hohenstein.

Michaelmas.

Heb. 1, 14.

It is a most startling revelation which the opening chapter of the Book of Job discloses. We read: vv. 6. 7. For a moment the veil which hides the unseen world from our human vision is drawn aside, and we are invited to the contemplation of a most mysterious truth, namely, that "going to and fro in the earth," walking up and down in it, there are "fallen spirits." Not content, as it were, to pace up and down in his own cell, the place of darkness appointed for him, the infernal enemy enters the habitation of men, where, relentlessly prosecuting his work, he spares not even the Jobs, the perfect and upright, those who fear God and eschew evil. That is indeed a gloomy chapter, this activity of the Wicked One — how, with no sound of his foot to be heard, no mark of his presence, he plies his work of destruction, of malice and intrigue. Nor is there any closing of doors or hiding ourselves from him, to say nothing of the folly of some who would deny his existence, saying, "There is no such being." — But while that introductory chapter of the Book of Job gives us an insight into Satan's kingdom, to amaze and distress us, there is another presentation, most cheering, namely, that of holy spirits, "sons of God," as they are termed, moving about, with equal activity and with still greater power, on missions of mercy and help.

Fixed in the church calendar for the 29th day of September is the Festival of Michael and All Angels. So much is said in the Bible about these heavenly beings, and such great things are ascribed to them that it has induced the Church to designate a time for the special contemplation of them. Bringing together the statements found in the Scriptures, we would note —

1. Some of their characteristics; 2. Their employment;
3. How this matter affects us.

1.

Of all the creatures that sprang from the hand of the Almighty when He called this universe into existence by His almighty word, probably the first, as unquestionably the highest and brightest, are the creatures which we call angels. That they were the first at creation is inferred from the passage in Job which tells us that the "morning stars sang together and the sons of God," meaning the angels, "shouted for joy." That they are the highest we may well deduce from a passage like our text.

Most marvelous creatures they are. Various traits are described to us. They excel in *strength,* Ps. 103, 20. In one of the visions of Isaiah the posts of the temple-doors trembled at the sound of their united voices. In Revelation one of them is mentioned as possessing such power as to hurl a burning mountain, as though it were a pebble, into the sea. On Easter morn an angel broke the seal of the sepulcher and rolled away the stone, which was very great, from the portal of the Savior's grave; and "for fear of him the keepers did quake and became as dead men." Again, they excel in *knowledge.* Referring to David, this statement is made in the Second Book of Samuel: "My lord is wise according to the wisdom of an angel of God." Most highly endowed at the beginning, their powers of intellect not impaired by sin, and having for well-nigh six thousand years been devoting themselves with intenseness and fervor to the understanding of things, we can in a measure comprehend how exalted must be their knowledge, so that they can perhaps foresee many things of the future. They also excel in *numbers,* surpassing all the ordinary computations of arithmetic. Daniel, in a vision, saw the Ancient of Days sitting upon His throne, with "thousands of thousands ministering unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him." The apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of them as "an innumerable company," and in the Passion-story the Savior says: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" A Roman legion consisted of six thousand men; more than 72,000 celestial spirits would therefore at His slightest beck have rushed to the Savior's help. And these countless myriads, we learn, are most systematically arranged and divided into various *ranks,* such as the cherubim and seraphim, with each angel possessed of his own *name,* such as Gabriel, Raphael, Michael. They are wise, we have learned, strong, and numerous.

2.

How do the holy angels make use of their marvelous faculties and powers? To what extent they do so is not fully told us: perhaps we could not understand if we were told. In general, we may say they are God's ministers. They minister unto God, or serve Him, in a twofold manner: by executing judgments upon His enemies and by carrying out His gracious designs of protection and mercy toward His friends. The first time we read of the activity of an angel is in Paradise, where the Bible says that God, when man had fallen into sin, placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life. Accordingly, the holy angels are sometimes messengers of vengeance. Will Pharaoh not let God's people go? An angel of the Lord goes forth on that fatal night and slays the first-born in every house of the Egyptians. Is Sennacherib's army besieging the Holy City, mocking its pious king and defying the Almighty? An angel flies on his mission of terror, and in one night a hundred fourscore and five thousand, that is, 185,000, lie prostrate in the Assyrian camp. Has the cry of the wicked cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, come up before God? Fire and brimstone rain down upon them. In short, if, according to the Book of Revelation, any vials of Jehovah's wrath are to be poured out on any particular part of our corrupt earth, an angel breaks the seal, and the disaster comes, be it by way of pestilence, epidemic, fire, wind-storms, violence, destruction, or otherwise.

But more preeminently are they represented, as stated in our text, as ministering spirits "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." As we review our Bible knowledge, what a pleasant array it opens! Turning to the Old Testament, we see angels leading Lot and his daughters out from burning Sodom and Gomorrah; see one of them bringing food and drink to fainting and disheartened Elijah under the juniper-tree; again, stopping the mouths of the lions in the den, so that they could not harm Daniel. Turning to the New Testament, we recall how one of them, Gabriel, announced the birth of John the Baptist to his father Zacharias in the Temple and to Virgin Mary at Nazareth that she would become the mother of the promised Messiah; how an angel was God's messenger to proclaim to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem the birth of the Savior, while the whole multitude of the heavenly host chanted their "Glory to God," etc.; how an angel of God directed Joseph to take the young Child and His mother to the land of Egypt; how the holy angels ministered to our Lord after His temptation by Satan; how an angel strengthened Him in the agony of Gethsemane; how angels guarded the empty sepulcher on Easter morning; how angels stood beside the disciples when they beheld Christ ascending to heaven. Later we find an angel directing the deacon Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch and telling Cornelius, the centurion, to send to Joppa for Peter. Bound and fettered in prison, the same apostle is released by an angel; and Paul, amid the dreadful storm of the Adriatic, is comforted by an angel, and all lives with him are saved. In these many and manifold other ways angels ministered to the heirs of salvation in past ages. And now? Are their services at an end? The text reads not "were," "were they not ministering spirits?" but: "*Are* they not ministering spirits?" It is as true to-day as well-nigh thousand years ago upon Jacob's ladder that they ascend and descend, from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, in the performance of their heavenly missions. And what do they do?

God's Word tells us that they are present with us, that *they* mingle with us right here in our worship and assemblies. St. Paul, in the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, declares that women should have their heads covered in church "because of the angels," in token of their modesty and becoming respect. They environ the preacher as he stands in the pulpit and gaze with delight upon the attentive listeners in the pews. They hover over this baptismal font and gather around us as we kneel at the Lord's Table. How far they have access to men's minds, how much power they possess to affect our thoughts and feelings, it is difficult precisely to state. But since their services are opposed to the malignant efforts of evil spirits, and knowing what Satan does, we may somewhat infer what *they* do. There is a traditional notion, always held in the Christian Church, that at baptism every soul has been placed in the custody of a guardian spirit, who never leaves his charge till he sees that soul safe in paradise. That is not fancy, poetic, pious imagination, but rests upon sound Scriptural foundation, with this difference, that the Bible speaks not of one particular angel's being assigned to that work, — though that may be, — but in the plural, angels, for instance, in the 91st Psalm. The promise to the man that trusteth in the Lord is: "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Accordingly, they minister in a variety of ways which we do not understand, also to our bodies. It is not chance — a word which has no place in the Christian's vocabulary — that accounts for so many deliverances from accidents, the greater part of which are unseen, from perils from the elements, from wicked men, and from evil spirits. Yes, this is a truth that enters deeply into our daily lives. Let us reflect for a moment on what this means. As we rise from our couch in the morning, as we enter upon our daily duties, mingle with the multitude on the crowded street, go about our affairs of toil and diversion; again, in the evening, as our weary heads sink upon the pillow, — is it not a thought of solemn and comfortable interest that, lining our pathway, environing our sitting-down and rising-up, watching our going-out and guarding our coming-in, we have with us, under all circumstances of bodily and mental trials, unseen companions, vigilant and intelligent body-guards? Most significant — and how appropriate! — are the words of that morning and evening prayer in our Catechism: "Into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me that the wicked Foe may have no power over me." And so on, till the hour of death, the friendly offices of these holy ones continue. When poor Lazarus died, Jesus said he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." That is not mere parabolical drapery. It is not groundless fancy to which the dying Christian gives utterance when we sing: "Bright angels are come from glory; They're round my bed and in my room; They wait to waft my spirit home." When we pass through the shadowy valley, when our spirit leaves this tenement of clay, we may confidently expect that they will bear it on soft pinions to its heavenly abode. Nor do their activities cease then. On that Great Day they shall gather in the bodies of the elect from the four corners of the earth at the end of the world and shall be our associates in all eternity.

3.

What effect ought this to have upon us? In the first place, it invites our gratitude to God for having given us the constant assistance and presence of the blessed and good spirits. What a wealth of comfort it sets before us to know that, whenever we are lonely or tempted or suffering, we have these invisible comrades and helpers with us. Was it not so with desponding Elijah under the juniper-tree? with the fainting soul of St. Paul in the shipwreck on the Adriatic? with our blessed Lord in Gethsemane? When He passed through the agonies of the gloomy Garden, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him. So with us. Let the thought that these heavenly spirits are ever around us in times of distress, of ill report, of suffering of body or mind, in the manifold griefs and discouragements, sorrows and trials, that beset us in daily life be to us an inspiration. Too little perhaps do we, as God's people, think of them, avail ourselves of this encouraging teaching of God's Word, that they are ministering spirits, sent to help, uplift, strengthen, console us.

Again, let us think of them for our exhortation and imitation. For our exhortation in this way: Since these good and heavenly beings are present with us and ever surround us, should we entertain thoughts and feelings, indulge desires that are impure, irreverent, and offensive, utter profane, uncharitable, coarse words, and do what is calculated to make them turn their radiant faces from us and no longer to minister unto us? Should the sense of their presence not act as a check-rein, a curb, in this respect? — Rather let us imitate them. "Thy will be done on earth," we recite every time we speak the Lord's Prayer, "as it is in heaven." In heaven the angels do God's will. In what way? By worshiping Him and serving Him in carrying out His commands. Never are we doing God's will more and better than when, following their example, we are engaged in this place in worshiping, lifting up our voices in hymns of adoration and praise, paying our vows to the Most High, and setting ourselves to do God's will in Christian obedience. Would to God we would and could do it as cheerfully, constantly, and perfectly as they are doing it!

Finally, how significantly does this doctrine of the angels set before us that which is the outstanding theme of the Scriptures from first to last, namely, God's wonderful and loving provision for our salvation! As God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son into it, who, enduring the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha, obtained eternal salvation for us, so in His love and infinite wisdom He appointed and sent forth these spirits that the work of His Son might be furthered by their constant ministry. Says the Savior: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The salvation of men's souls, their entrance into His kingdom, that is the one great object of God's thoughts, of all His plans and purposes, and to this the ministry of the angels is directed. And then, with all this manifestation and putting forth of God's love and purpose there should be found those groveling, earth-bound worms who brush it all aside, too busy with the things of self to give it concern?! Let it not be so with you. Rather, keeping before us the noble example of these heavenly associates, following their pattern, let us find our real blessedness in doing the will of our common Lord, till, "where their anthems they ceaselessly pour, we with the angels may bow and adore." L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

Reformation Festival.

Ps. 103, 2.

By the providence of Almighty God we are come to the four-hundred-thirteenth anniversary of the glorious Reformation. More than four centuries have elapsed since the man appointed by God Himself inaugurated, by nailing his Ninety-five Theses, or sentences, against the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, that wonderful revolution which has restored to mankind the pure Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments. What changes have been wrought in the world since that day! In many respects it is a great privilege to live in these present times. Our eyes are permitted to look upon scenes that eyes in former generations have not seen. We mark the wonderful industrial progress that has taken place, the astounding improvements in science, the instantaneous communication of thought and word on lightning's wing and the waves of the ether, the rapid transportation of persons and property not only on speedy wheels on the ground, but in ships in the air, crossing continents from one ocean to another. Progress in all lines of human endeavor. How in these four hundred years has the political complexion of the map of this earth been transformed! The nations then in power have become secondary. Education, when has it ever been so wide-spread, its facilities so easy and so great for every child? Freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, of press, of government, of worship; every advantage of social, moral, and religious elevation. Are these not the reigning principles among us. And would you know to what and to whom, under God, we owe that? These, be it noted, are the divine fruits of the Reformation of four hundred years ago, the blessed results of that mighty movement of the sixteenth century which God brought about through His chosen instrument Dr. Martin Luther. The Reformation was God's blessing bestowed upon enslaved humanity, His gift to our human race. And it is fitting that in intelligent recognition our voice should annually ring out in glad and joyous utterances of praise and thanksgiving and that we should devote a sermon to a review, somewhat in detail, of the benefits of the Reformation, more numerous and varied and far-reaching than most persons are aware of. Let me therefore speak to you —

1. *Of a few of these blessings* and
2. *Of the duty which the possession of them involves.*

1.

The Reformation has put into men's hands and home the *Bible.* Time was when the Bible was a concealed and shut book, shut in many ways: shut by being stored away in the dusty and antiquated libraries of universities, to which but few had access; shut by being written only in the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin languages, which the people could not read; shut in consequence of the immense sum which it would have cost to possess it; shut because of the universal ignorance that prevailed, in consequence of which the people would not have read it even if they had it; shut because the highest authority in the Church did not permit them to read it. The Bible is now to be found in nearly all living languages. For a trifle of coin it can be had by every man, woman, and child willing to have it; yes, it is cheerfully furnished by Bible societies for nothing. What was once so tightly sealed and concealed is unclasped. And wherever such is the case, religion, liberty, intelligence, render the people prosperous and happy.

The Reformation has set aside all human mediators between God and man and has opened the door of approach to God — directly. All due respect to the Virgin Mary, yet she is not to be worshiped. A saint may be a godly character, but his image must not be knelt before; for God says on the stone table of His Law: First Commandment. No one and nothing in Christ's religion is ever permitted between Him and the soul, 1 Tim. 2, 5; Eph. 2, 8. 9. There was a time when no such teaching was heard. At one sweep the Reformation cleared away all the immense incumbrances of work-righteousness, Mary-worship, and saintly mediators that blocked up the door for the poor soul that would come before God.

Another benefit: the Reformation has restored the *Sacrament* in all its parts and in its true character. For ages the lay communicant was compelled to content himself with only one element, being deprived of the cup. And the Sacrament was perverted into the mass; the people were told that the priest offers up Christ in an unbloody manner for the sins of the living and also of the dead. The Reformation exposed these wrong teachings and practises. Our communicants, when kneeling in reception, have the Sacrament in the same form and purity as it was instituted by Christ.

The Reformation has assigned to the preaching of the Gospel its proper place. The duty of the minister is not to say masses in a dead language or to perform a cumbrous routine of knee-bending and unmeaning ceremonies. He must instruct the minds, enlighten the consciences, and improve the hearts of the flock of Christ by the preaching of the Gospel. As St. Paul says, he would rather speak five words that could be understood than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue, which impart no edification. The Reformation has reinstated in the Church the most efficient agency that the world has ever know for the conversion, elevation, and improvement of all classes of men.

The Reformation has relieved the minds of men of the immense mass of superstitions by which they were harassed. A most prolific source of such fears existed in the notion that the souls of Christians, instead of at once entering into rest at death, were compelled to remain for an indefinite period in purgatorial fires. In this unfounded notion lay the source not only of the superstitious fears that harassed the minds of men, but of the foul religious impositions which were practised upon their credulity. We think of the infamous sale of indulgences by John Tetzel, which led to Dr. Luther's protest. Another was the belief in relics, dead men's bones, etc. Relieving the Church from these fears and these corruptions, the Reformation has conferred an unspeakable blessing upon men.

The Reformation has broken down an overgrown and despotic hierarchy, priesthood, and restored the power in the government of the Church to the congregation of believers. Words cannot begin to describe the power of the Papacy in the Middle, or Dark, Ages. Here is their own language: "Sitting in that chair in which Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, sat to the close of his life, the Catholic Church recognizes in his person [that is, the Pope] the most exalted degree of dignity and the full amplitude of jurisdiction, a dignity and jurisdiction not based on constitutions, but emanating from no less authority than from God Himself. As the successor of St. Peter and the true and legitimate vicar of Jesus Christ, he therefore presides over the universal Church, the father and governor of all the faithful." And how far does this power and jurisdiction extend? "The Pope," says a Roman authority, "is the supreme judge and director of the consciences of men, of the peasant that tills the field and the prince that sits on the throne, of the household that lies in the shade of privacy and the legislature that makes the laws; the last sole supreme judge of what is right and wrong." The Reformation broke the backbone of this priestly power. It has brought the nations from under its tyrannical yoke.

In breaking the yoke of religious despotism the Reformation has at the same time rescued man from the crushing power of political tyranny. With the knowledge of man's spiritual rights, it has also opened his mind to the knowledge of his civil rights. Man was never so free as he is since the Lutheran Reformation. Kings have not been such tyrants since the Reformation as they were before. The very spirit of Protestantism is at war with despotic institutions.

Time would fail us to enumerate all the benefits. We feel the impulse of that wonderful religious movement in every department of human activity. It has entirely changed the current of human affairs, it has infused a new spirit into all men's thinking, feeling, and acting, it has purified the Church. In spite of itself the Roman Church of to-day, especially where it labors side by side with Protestants, is forced to be a better Church than was the Roman Church before the time of Luther. Instead of abusing Luther, it ought to exalt him; for it owes a debt of gratitude to him. The destruction of Protestantism would be the signal for the return of all those religious, moral, social, and political evils that cursed the world before the Reformation. Truly, the Reformation was not of man. Though inaugurated by Luther, it was God's merciful work to restore to Christendom His Gospel with its blessed fruits. John 3, 16; Rom. 3, 28; John 14, 6; 1 Cor. 3, 11.

2.

There is the duty of grateful praise. "Bless the Lord." We may well bless the Lord, with an overwhelming sense of our obligation to Him. Very dull indeed both of perception and of feeling must the heart be that does not greatly appreciate the fruits of the Reformation. They are really inestimable. Be it with full heart and a glad voice for us in solemn service to chant our *Gloria in Excelsis* and say: "We praise Thee," etc.

There is implied the soul's acceptance of the grace which His benefits convey. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." If the soul and not the lips only are to bless the Lord for benefits conferred, the soul must in its sentiment and spirit accord with the nature and design of those benefits. If the soul is not partaking of the blessings bestowed, does not approve and appreciate them, how can it bless the Lord for them? In other words, have we Luther's faith, Luther's fervor for Bible truth, Luther's humble trust in the mercy of God in Christ, Luther's fervid zeal in behalf of what is right? Are our souls in accord with the principles of the Reformation? It is only then that we truly can do what the psalmist calls upon the soul to do, "bless the Lord and His holy name."

Again, "forget not all His benefits." God's benefits must be remembered. Luther and his noble colaborers and their great work can never be forgotten. So long as truth is valued and real heroism is honored, will their names and deeds be written in men's memories and engraven in their hearts. The truth for which they so nobly contended and risked their lives can never die. It will not do for any to say that they honor Luther's name and work while they accept not and abuse the doctrines which he taught and fought for. If we have any doubt that Luther was what history tells us and the Bible predicts him to be, — God's instrument to restore the Church to its apostolic purity, — then let us be done with him, renounce his name, turn our back upon his person. But if we are persuaded that he was the Lord's agent and that what he so valiantly taught and defended is the truth, it behooves us to array ourselves firmly upon his side, which is the side of loyalty to the Bible, its teachings and principles.

If we really prize the blessings of the Reformation, we will desire to perpetuate them. We are the depositories of a sacred trust. We are responsible before God. A precious legacy has been put into our hands, not for our own benefit alone, but also for the benefit of unborn generations to come after us. It must pass through our hands as complete and perfect as it was when it came to us. In plain words, it is the duty of the Lutheran Church in the present generation to preserve her faith pure, her piety genuine, her energies active, her colleges well maintained, her seminaries sound in doctrine and adequately supported, her ministry orthodox, godly, and faithful, and her membership intelligent, pious, and working. We have a great mission, and we have the means and, I trust, the wish and will to accomplish that mission. Woe be to us if we should prove ourselves unfaithful to our solemn trust. Let each member feel his and her responsibility. Let the Reformation Festival awaken in our hearts a finer faith in our Lutheran teachings, a deeper interest in our history, a stronger attachment to our services, a more active zeal, a greater love to the Head of the Church and His cause. Nor let us fail to open our hands as well as our hearts — first ourselves, then our substances to the Lord. L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

Thanksgiving Day.

1 Sam. 12, 23. 24.

Invited by the chief executive of our State and nation and convinced of the propriety of such invitation, we have entered into the temple of the Most High to offer our annual tribute of praise and appreciation to the good and blessed God. Very meet and right it is so to do. Mercies publicly bestowed demand public acknowledgment. May there rise before Him from every heart the incense of sincere thankfulness! May we with the holy prophet whose words have just been read rear this day a memorial of His kindness and write upon it: Eben-Ezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us! "O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His praise together."

The passage of Scripture just read was the pious exhortation of the prophet Samuel at one of the most interesting periods of the Jewish history. This venerable man, having governed Israel with uprightness and integrity many years, was about to transfer his authority to another; and in surrendering his office, he embraces the favorable occasion for recounting to his people some of the signal instances of divine goodness towards them from the time they were slaves in Egypt unto that day. He concludes his address with this earnest and affectionate appeal to their gratitude and tells them, if they will but be mindful of God's mercies, they will never depart from His service. None more appropriate to this joyful occasion. Let me show you —

1. *Some of the great things God hath done for us;*
2. *What in return is due Him;*
3. *The means by which these blessings may be continued and preserved.*

1.

This day we call to mind a long list of manifold mercies vouchsafed by the great and benevolent Author of all. First among these the ingathering of the harvest. We rejoice that the sun, moon, stars, and clouds have not ceased, according to God's promise, to move over our fields in glorious procession, that God has made the furrows wet with showers, and that He has blessed the springing crops and brought to ripeness the various fruits after their kind. We rejoice and give thanks that our old mother earth has still held out and that the divine covenant made in Noah's time has not failed — that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, have not ceased, but continued their appointed order, making sure our bread and provisions. The husbandmen have again sown, and the reapers have again gathered, while not in such abundance as men have by previous years of greatest prosperity been led to expect, yet in sufficient quantity for all our wants. Our garners are comfortably filled, even if not to the point of bursting; agricultural industry has been rewarded, and hundreds of millions of bushels of grain of every species have been realized from the hand of heavenly Goodness. From Maine to Florida, from New York to California, from the shores of the Atlantic to the coast of the Pacific, the reapers have had occasion to call to each other in gladness of heart. In proportion with this agricultural prosperity has been the commercial. We have had a season of fair business activity. Some depression there has been, but the manufacturing interests of a legitimate character are showing a healthful record. The whirring noise of machinery, the beating of hammers and rollers, the shriek of engines, the fires of furnaces and forges, the hum of factories, is lively continuing, furnishing employment to the men of brawny muscles and supplying their families with bread. For this let us be thankful. Materially, commercially, agriculturally, can we say: "The Lord hath done great things for us."

We note, too, that this has been a year of national healthfulness. No epidemic has invaded or ravaged our shores. God's winds, as they swept over our States, have been laden with salubriousness. No quarantine had to be erected. The good gift of bodily vigor has been bestowed upon our nation from ocean to ocean. Among the gifts included in our "daily bread" Dr. Luther in the explanation of the Fourth Petition mentions also good health. For that let us be thankful.

So, too, it has been a year of peace. Peace is one of the choicest blessings which Heaven bestows upon a nation. The very suggestion carries our minds back to those melancholy scenes of terror which can never fade from our memory: when the sword was unsheathed, when the flower of our manhood was enlisted, the plains of foreign powers covered with carnage, the fields desolate and plowed with shot, while mothers and wives and others united by tenderest ties of blood and affection were waiting with agonized suspense and trembling hearts to hear the result and, alas! too frequently were left to bedew with their tears the memory of their departed slain. A few moments of reflection will tell, with an energy which makes one feel the poverty of language, how much we are indebted to God for that peace which walks stalwart and erect in our land.

Then, too, another cause for thanksgiving is that of the means of education. How, just in the last years, have the facilities for the cultivation of the mind, the diffusion of knowledge, been multiplied! In a country like ours, this is of the utmost importance. Our schools are so spread out over the whole of this vast continent that knowledge is brought to the very door of the poorest peasant. If there is an individual among us who has grown to manhood without the benefits of a common school education, it must in all likelihood be either from a want of natural capacity to learn or from his own neglect to use the means placed within his reach. Libraries abound.

To this we add the still greater blessing that we are permitted to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience; that religion is not polluted by the touch of the secular arm; that no preference is given to a particular Church; that infidelity, falsehood, a skeptical science, and a reigning unbelief have no authority to close our sanctuaries, to silence the preached Word, to hinder the free and undisturbed observance of God's holy ordinances, or to put any constraint upon us in the pursuit of our convictions. And may Almighty God in His infinite mercy grant that the blessings of our pure and holy religion may be more and more diffused and the blessed Gospel of His Son have free course and be glorified until every heart, being renewed and sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost, may send forth its grateful tribute of thanksgiving and praise to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier! "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

Hitherto we have spoken only of national blessings. It is not amiss to touch upon what God has done for us individually, personally, in our home. Here your own reflection must supply what we can only intimate. But consider the numberless privileges and comforts and enjoyments with which you are surrounded, of nature, of providence, of grace, socially, domestically, churchly: that you are this hour alive to greet another Thanksgiving Day, whilst myriads have passed away amid all the variety of woe found in this world; that your loved ones have not been swept down by the scythe of the Destroyer; that you have not been called upon to pine on beds of sickness, enduring sharp pain and suffering; that the walls of your home have not been devastated by fire and storm; that, on the contrary, blessings of body and vigor of mind, sufficiency of income, a pious spouse, pious children, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like, have been your portion; that clothed in garments of warmth, with limbs unmutilated, senses and reason sound and clear, you sit in the sanctuary. What occasion for thankfulness! But I forbear, Lord, for Thy mercies are innumerable to reckon them up in order; that is as difficult as to count the stars in the heavens or the sand on the seashore.

2.

Our blessings would be converted into a curse if our hearts would be unaffected by this kindness of God. Ingratitude with respect to one's fellow-man is considered the evidence of a most abandoned character, the unfailing mark of a mind destitute of every noble sentiment. How shall we judge of it with respect to the heavenly Benefactor! Yet how many who are occupied by the cares of the world, engaged in the pursuit of frivolous objects, never feelingly remembering the goodness of the Giver of all! Thanksgiving Day is with them a day of fleshly latitude, of pampering their animal appetite, not a day of gratitude. Blindness, perverseness, of which no Christian should become guilty. The exercise of thankfulness for divine mercies, one should think, is the simplest duty, the easiest, even as it is the noblest and most elevating of all the occupations of man, placing in our heart the greatest object that can engage it and in our mouth the greatest name that can fill it.

3.

But how shall this gratitude be expressed? Is it sufficient for us to bless God with our lips, from mere custom to enter into His holy temple and unite in song and prayer with His people? This alone will not satisfy Him who searcheth the heart. We must "fear the Lord and serve Him in truth." Fear Him not with a servant's dread, but with a childlike, a filial fear, a fear which, with affectionate reverence, views God as the tenderest of fathers, trusts in His mercies, makes desirous of walking in His commandments, avoids whatever displeases Him, and keeps the soul in close communion with Him.

Where there is this fear, it will necessarily impel us to "serve the Lord in truth with all our heart," as we confess in the First Article: "For all of which it is my duty to thank and to praise, to serve and obey Him." Sentiment and feeling alone is not gratitude; it requires practical evidence in works and deeds. Happy the person who under a sense of grateful feeling surrenders himself to God and lives for that higher and holy and proper purpose for which God has given us life, namely, to glorify Him. As it says: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Such a mode of expressing our gratitude is the right and good way. It is the right way, enjoined upon us by our very creation. For what is the purpose of our creation? Your own consciences attest that the multiplied and constantly reiterated mercies of the Lord demand these returns. It is nothing more than what is right, proper, becoming. It is, moreover, the profitable way, that which secures for us new favors. God wastes not His blessings; the streams of His goodness will not always flow upon a barren and unfertile soil. If we do not appreciate what He bestows upon us and are not induced by His divine mercy to serve Him, use aright what He gives us, there shall be taken from us what we have. As many ungrateful persons as we have among us, so many obstacles are there in the way of prosperity, so many hindrances and injurers have we to the welfare of our country. It is also a safe and good way. A person who is grateful preserves a heart which in the midst of prosperity remains humble. Success will not become a snare to such a one. It will preserve us from lifting up our heart in pride. On the other hand, when there is adversity, depression in income, shortage, our heart will not run into distrust, a dissatisfied and discontented spirit; it will be thankful for what it receives, remembering that it is much more than it deserves. After all, it is not so much the bountifulness of what is bestowed as the sense of gratitude with which one receives whatever he receives. That is one great fault with us all, we are apt to live too much in the darkness of complaint and depression instead of living in the daylight and enlivening atmosphere of praise and thankfulness. Yet nothing has a more wholesome influence upon the life and temper. It contributes much to make our existence brighter, more cheerful. Let a man learn to exclaim regularly: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!" and he will be the happier and the better for it. Yes, it is a good way, a noble, heavenly, God-honoring way, which the prophet here enjoins. Let us conform to that way this day, all our days, till these earthly thanksgiving festivals shall pass over into the heavenly and we shall sing without ceasing, in infinitely more ardent strains of love and praise, that song of triumph: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and thanksgiving be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, unto the Lamb, forever and ever." L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES.

FIVE GREAT DOCTRINES.

The Word of God.

1 Pet. 1, 23.

One of the great topics treated in the Bible is the Word of God. This Word is there praised in beautiful language. The 119th Psalm, with its 176 verses, is a hymn of praise written to exalt the Word of the Lord. The second part of Ps. 19 has the same theme. This Word of God we find in the Bible. We are not satisfied, however, with the statement behind which unbelief frequently hides that *in* the Bible we find the Word of the Lord. The right way of putting it is to say that the Bible *is* the Word of God. Where there is a word of the Bible, there you have a word of God. Outside of the Bible we have no reliably attested written Word of the Lord.

It is really a stupendous fact that God gave His Word to us. That He, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who lives and reigns from everlasting to everlasting, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, had compassion on us and bent down to the sinful human race and spoke to it, is a marvel of divine mercy and love. And that He gave this Word to us in a special volume, in an inspired book written by the men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is another such marvel.

The Bible tells us in many passages about the importance of the Word. "One thing is needful" — this saying of the Savior has reference to the Word. Cf. also Luke 11, 28. We shall dwell on the greatness of the Word of God in our joint meditation to-day by considering it as a means of grace.

The Word of God a Means of Grace.

We see from the text: —

1. *That the Word is living and abiding;*
2. *That it brings about the new birth in us.*

1.

St. Peter, speaking of the Word of God in our text, ascribes several qualities to it. We human beings speak words. The gift of speech is one of the most remarkable faculties with which we are endowed. Great things do we accomplish by means of our word. Think of the work of the salesman, the political orator, the teacher, the lawyer — they all rely largely on the word. Cf. Ahithophel and Hushai. 2 Sam. 16, 17. Alas, that human beings so frequently use the word for sinful purposes! Cf. Jas. 3, 3—13.

While human speech is frequently effective, often it fails of its purpose. In many a case promises are made, and they are nothing but — a word, as we say, indicating that, after all, the human word in itself possesses little power. A father pleads with his children and often must say that he accomplishes nothing. The President of the nation delivers a beautiful speech at his inauguration; it is applauded, but soon forgotten. We say of the human word that it usually perishes the moment that it is spoken. It has been uttered, and that is the end of it. Think of the millions of words which we speak in the course of a year. How many of them do we remember a week after they have left our mouth? How many a year later?

With this contrast the Word of God. It is an incorruptible seed. It liveth and abideth forever, says the text. A little seed can accomplish great things, but it has to die in order to do its work, suffer corruption. Cf. John 12, 24. The Word of God goes out on its course through the world, doing great things, but it remains as bright and pure and strong as it was the minute it was uttered. Ever since John wrote the last book of the Bible, the sacred volume has been complete. It has been handled by millions, it has been lauded and despised, trasured and burned; but it is just as majestic to-day as it ever was.

It liveth. When we speak we expel breath, and usually that is all that can be said of the human word — it is a breath vanishing in the atmosphere around us. It has no life and, as a result, no power. The Word of God liveth. When God utters something through His prophets and apostles, when He sends a message through them, we are dealing, not with a mere breath, but with something that is instinct with life and therefore with force. Just as there is activity wherever there is life, so this Word is active, an agent accomplishing the designs of the great God. Cf. Heb. 4, 12. We are aware that this is picture language. What is meant is that God with His power is behind the Word, giving it efficacy. When you touch an electrically charged wire, you come in contact not merely with that little bit of metal which you put your finger on, but with all the power which is proceeding from the dynamo miles away. So when we hear the Word of God, we come in touch not merely with the letter on the printed page, not merely with the fleeting words of the preacher standing before us, but with the vast dynamo which we call the omnipotence of God.

If we always were aware of this, how different would not our attitude be toward this Word! Cf. our Bible-reading and church-attendance.

This Word abideth forever. You cannot destroy it. Often bold critics lifted their voice against princes and kings who were corrupt and needed reproof. They were quickly silenced by execution. This Word you cannot get rid of in such fashion. It abideth. Think of King Jehoiakim trying to destroy the Word, Jer. 36, 20 ff. The same attempt was made by persecuting Roman emperors, and in the Middle Ages the Roman Church tried to exterminate the Bibles that were written in the vernacular. Such attempts have in a measure continued to our day. The Word abideth. "The Word they still shall let remain." Cf. especially Matt. 5, 18; Luke 16, 17.

When we speak of the Word as abiding, we mean to say also that it is everlastingly true. Human words come and go. If they are wise sayings, they will last some time. Usually they are superseded before long. The Word of God, however, is always true and right. The time never will come when it will have to be called antiquated.

How eager should we be, then, to come in contact and to remain in contact with it! Placing yourself on it, you have a foundation which will not fall when the universe collapses.

What we have heard of the Word, its incorruptibility, its being alive, its abiding character, all shows that the Word is a powerful agent.

2.

This agent we say is a means of grace. What precisely do we mean when we call the Word of God the means of grace. It is this, that God employs it as the instrument to do His great work in us, the work that must be done if we are to become possessors of the blessings earned for us by Christ.

There are people who think that God does His work in us largely without any means, directly through the Spirit. In the Reformed churches this view has been taught. In fact, this is one of the points where the Lutheran and the Reformed churches differ sharply. Some of the leaders of the Reformed denominations have ridiculed the idea that anybody should think God needs a vehicle when He wants to bring His spiritual gifts to man.

In its extreme form we see this type of doctrine represented in the teachings and practises of the Quakers, who sit in their church-meetings in silence, not a word being spoken till one of the assembled members is seized by the Spirit, as they say, and tells the congregation what he believes has been communicated to him. There the Spirit is held to come without the Word.

No one of us, of course, should attempt to deny that God can bestow His blessings without the preaching or learning of the Word. That His almighty power is unlimited we certainly emphasize, and should emphasize. But the question is not what the great power of God *can* do, but rather which *means* God has appointed and promised to use to bestow His blessings upon us. The Bible uniformly directs us to the Word of God and the Sacraments, and hence we call them the means of grace, the instruments through which God operates in us.

The great work that has to be performed in us if we are to be saved is the creation of faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." It is the work which we call conversion, or regeneration, the new birth. See what the text says: "Being born again by the Word of God." It is God who begets us anew. Cf. 1 Pet. 1, 3; Rom. 10, 16; Gal. 3, 2. 5.

Think of how Jesus made disciples — He spoke to them; He called them. Paul was converted by a message, that is, by the Word. The audience in the house of Cornelius received the Spirit through the Word. In all these instances the Word was the means of grace.

This, then, is a matter of great practical importance. When we hear the Word, then a divine power is pulling at our heart-strings. Do not harden your hearts at such a time. Cf. Heb. 3, 7 ff. You have to have faith to be saved. You cannot create this faith yourself, but you are told that God worketh in you through the Word. Will you refuse to read and hear it? Will you stay away from where it is preached? God is anxious to kindle the flame of faith in you, and His torch is the Word. He wishes to strengthen the spiritual life in you, and the food He uses, again, is the Word. Cf. John 6, 63. May this Word, which is incorruptible, living, abiding, lead us to the life which is everlasting! W. Arndt.

The Image of God in Man.

Gen. 1, 26. 27.

Among the subjects on which the Bible presents specific teachings is man, his origin, his nature, his destiny. While self-observation will reveal many marvelous things about ourselves, while history sheds much light on what men are and can accomplish, while conscience offers weighty instruction to every one of us, for authoritative, absolutely infallible information on our past, present, and future we go to God's Word, and we are thankful that when it speaks of God's creatures, it dwells not chiefly on angels or on the wonders of the firmament or on plant and animal life, but on man. The text before us speaks of

The Image of God in Man.

We see: —

1. *That the Bible states the creation of man in the image of God as a fact;*
2. *That it designates man thus created as the head and crown of all creatures here on earth.*

1.

A book written by Mr. Bryan and given a good deal of favorable and unfavorable notice, according to the religious position of the critic, bears the title "In His Image." The book was intended to defend the belief that man was created in the image of God. Is that a Scriptural belief? The text answers affirmatively.

Moses here does not say much; but what he does assert he asserts clearly. Note the clarity of his statement about man's creation in the image of God, v. 27.

Let us note, first, that according to the narrative of Gen. 1 man was created last of all creatures on earth. It was the sixth day. We here have an indication that man was to have a unique position.

We read that God deliberated with Himself before the creation of man. This is one of the most remarkable passages in Holy Scripture. Christian Bible students have always held that the three Persons of the holy Trinity are here described as consulting together.

God created man, says the text. A direct creation is asserted. Details are given in chap. 2. Though God fashioned man's body from the dust of the ground, this was a real creation. Evolutionists let man be the result, or outcome, of a new development, rising to his present position through innumerable stages. What shall we say? 1) This is the direct opposite of what is taught in the Scriptures. 2) There is no agreement between the proponents of this theory. 3) The view of the ape-descent of man has lately been called false by an eminent scientist, himself an evolutionist (Dr. Osborn; cf. *Lutheran Witness,* February 18, 1930). 4) The missing link has not been found. The deductions made from bones of supposedly prehistoric men are wild guesses.

The text speaks of the creation of man in the image of God, not in the image of beasts, of apes, the chimpanzee, etc. The view of the evolutionists is degrading. We can be thankful that we do not have to hold it.

But what does the expression "the image of God" mean? Likeness is indicated, that is plain. The text, content with stating the fact, does not give us further light. We have to go to other Scripture passages for more detailed information.

Somebody might be inclined to think that man's noble, upright stature is here hinted at, distinguishing him, as it does, from animals. But, clearly, this cannot be meant, because God is a spirit, having no body.

The fact that man is a rational being, with a sense of responsibility, having understanding, memory, will, the gift of speech, conscience, might be thought to furnish the solution. But a study of the pertinent Scripture texts will reveal that more is implied in the expression under consideration. Let the Bible interpret itself, is an important principle of Bible-study.

Eph. 4, 24: To be "created after God," which is another way of saying "in the image of God," is to possess righteousness and holiness. This is the point of comparison, of resemblance, between God and man as first created. God is righteous and holy. Cf. Is. 6, 3. So He made man a holy being. This means, first, something negative, absence of sin; secondly, something positive, unwavering adherence to what is right, just, and good, love of God, obedience to His will.

The first man was a perfect saint, possessing what so many people erroneously have thought they might achieve by arduous, unrelenting efforts and tormenting of self.

Col. 3, 10 is another important Scripture: the image of God involves knowledge. God is omniscient. While not endowed with omniscience, the first parents nevertheless possessed deep insight and understanding. They had not gone to school, yet they were able to speak. Witness the wisdom Adam displayed when he gave to each animal its fitting name. Their knowledge embraced especially the things pertaining to God and His will; a spiritual knowledge it was, chiefly.

What a remarkable being therefore issued from the hand of God last of all, on the sixth day of creation, a being not merely of the highest physical excellence, but of marvelous mental and spiritual endowments, wise, discerning, pure, holy, able to understand the will of God and anxious to do His bidding!

2.

To this being God assigned the first place in the visible universe. Cf. v. 26. When God decided to create man in His image, His purpose was to give him dominion over the whole earth.

Behold here, then, as has been well said, the viceroy of God on earth. Cf. the appointment of Joseph over Egypt, Gen. 41, 39—41.

A blessed situation existed at that time. There was inward peace for man, because he was free from sin and evil desires and certain of the favor of God. There was outward peace and tranquillity as well, everything being subject to him and acknowledging his sovereignty. It is easy for the imagination to draw glowing pictures of the universal contentment and happiness which prevailed in that period. Believing Bible students have assumed with plausibility that if man had kept the image of God, he would, after a period of happy existence here on earth, without pain or death have been removed to the heavenly mansions.

Sad to say, the image of God was destroyed when man listened to the Tempter and fell into sin, losing his righteousness and holiness and forfeiting those superior powers of spiritual insight. When man looked at himself after the Fall, he was merely a wreck of his former noble self. His dominion over all creatures on earth is no longer a reality. His former subjects now shun him, rendering only such service as they have to. A heartrending chapter it is, that of the loss of the divine image.

But eternal praise be given to God! While not responsible for the loss of the divine image on the part of man, He has made provision for its restoration. He sent His Son to pay for our sins, so that the guilt attaching to man and making divine favor impossible might be removed, and He now sends His Spirit in the Word and the Sacraments to make us put our trust in this Son of His; and every one who does that gets to be a child of God and again is given the image of the heavenly Father — knowledge and righteousness and holiness. It is true, the image is not fully restored here on earth, sin remaining in us even though it cannot govern us. But in yonder life we shall be like Him, our dear Savior, the Son of God, having His image, for we shall see Him as He is, 1 John 3, 2; Ps. 17, 15.

Let it be our prayer that we belong to those in whom God, by the creation of faith in Jesus through the means of grace, refashions His image in part here on earth, completing the work in the realms of glory. Phil. 3, 13. 14.

W. Arndt.

The Providence of God.

Acts 17, 27c. 28.

The question of man's origin is much in the foreground of religious discussion these days. The Bible states that God *created* man. This doctrine has been received into the creeds of Christendom. Cf. the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed. Our Lutheran Confessions likewise proclaim this teaching. Cf. Augsburg Confession, Art. I, and Luther's Small Catechism. If any one should be surprised at the brevity with which this teaching is considered in the Confessions of our Church, then let him remember that when these documents were written no one who laid claim to the name Christian denied that man was created by God. In this respect a sad change has come about through the teaching of evolution. The Bible doctrine is confirmed by the conscience of man. To deny that God has created us necessitates that one does violence to his deepest convictions.

Closely related to this doctrine of creation is the doctrine of

The Providence of God,

which we shall consider on the basis of our text. We here learn: —

1. *God remains near to the creatures which He has made;*
2. *He supplies what they need for their existence.*

1.

Providence is derived from a Latin word meaning "to see in advance," "to see beforehand." It has come to designate the activity by which one supplies the needs of himself or of others. When we ascribe providence to God, we wish to say that He not only sees our special needs long before they exist, but that he furnishes us everything which these needs require.

The text brings this truth home to us in striking words. In the first place, it emphasizes that God is ever near us — "though He be not far from every one of us." These words are taken from the speech which Paul delivered on Mars Hill in Athens. In his audience there were people who denied the truth of the nearness of God, namely, the

Epicureans spoken of in v. 18. The Epicureans were not atheists, denying the existence of God; but they believed that the gods — or god — had their abode far away from our earth and no longer paid much attention to the affairs of men.

In our days we have many people who take a similar view. The so-called deists belong to this class. They believe in the existence of a higher being, but deny that this being has a share in the ordering of our lives.

Paul emphasizes that God is near us. He has not created us and then withdrawn. A carpenter builds a house, and then he leaves his handiwork to its fate. Not so our God.

The Bible teaches the nearness of our God in many passages pointing to His omnipresence.

We are here dealing with a teaching that must deter us when temptations to sin arise. But it is likewise a very comforting teaching. God is ever at our side, we are told. How highly do not children value, and long for, the presence of their parents; having them near by, they are satisfied. This is particularly true in cases of illness.

If God is always present, then He knows our needs. Let us not think that they are hidden from Him. Our prayers must not be taken to be necessary for informing God as to what we require; they are rather the outpourings of a heart that loves God and trusts in His guidance.

2.

Paul not merely asserts God's never-ending presence, but likewise that He grants us what we need. The text is very clear and forceful, v. 28.

God is spoken of as the element in which we live, etc. For purposes of comparison we may point to the air in which we live and which we breathe and which surrounds us on all sides.

We have here a marvelous arrangement of statements, culminating in a beautiful climax. In the first place, the mysterious thing we call life we have from and through God. If He were not granting it to us, we should at once cease to breathe, our heart would no longer beat, our eyes no longer see, etc. But more than this must be said. Not only life, but even all motion is from God. Some things move merely mechanically, without having life, like water flowing downhill and leaping over steep precipices, clouds that are sailing along gracefully in the blue sky, air which is passing by us in swift currents. There would be no motion if God were not bringing it about. Complete, absolute stillness, quiet, death, night, would rule in the universe. But Paul goes even further than this. In God we have our being. Without Him not only all life and motion would be lacking, but there would not be anything existing. There would be no universe, no creatures.

How forcefully does not all this teach us that we have our very being from God and that every good gift we owe to God! What we need for existence, for moving about, for living, God supplies it all. This is true of the least noticeable function of our smallest nerve as well as of the mighty rains that bring moisture to the thirsty earth and of the beautiful springtime, when, after the sleep of winter, nature again puts on its garment of green and prepares to yield us food and raiment.

The Bible teaches the providence of God in many a beautiful passage. Most striking are perhaps the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 6, 25—34. The Scriptures likewise give us many instances which confirm this teaching to us. Cf. the manna in the wilderness, the feeding of Elijah by means of ravens, the feeding of the five thousand.

In Paul's audience there were people who denied that a being higher than we supplies all of our needs. They were the Stoics, mentioned v. 18. According to their view, God is not above nature, but nature itself is God. Their teaching was pantheism, which identifies God and nature. When they said, God furnishes us what we need, that amounted to saying, The universe, of which we are a part, furnishes what we need. This teaching, which lowers God and makes Him merely the sum and substance of all things which we see, is widely held to-day. That it is altogether contrary to the teaching of the Bible should be clear at once.

Our text differentiates between God and ourselves. Let us not fall into the pantheistic error, which, in essence, says that we ourselves are God and take care of our needs; but let us ever render praise to the heavenly Lord and Master, who watches over us and in mercy supplies all of our wants.

May the thought of the providence of God, pointing out, as it does, His majesty, make us become aware of our own unworthiness and sinfulness, so that we shall be willing to accept the Gospel of the forgiveness effected by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in which Gospel the love of God shines even more brilliantly than in the doctrine of the divine providence! W. ARNDT.

Sanctification.

Eph. 2, 10.

At some time or other we have stood before ruins, a house, a hotel, a factory, that had been destroyed by fire and whose bleak, bare walls looked forbidding, though they betokened former stateliness. Such a sight fills the spectator with sadness. If he is particularly interested, he will hope that the building may be reerected. The startling truth is that there are ruins all about us every day of our lives, ruins that are animate, walking and talking, working and playing, — it is man. For a close-up view take a mirror. Look at yourself. Man at present is but a ruin of his former noble self which issued from the hand of God in the Garden of Eden. The fire that destroyed the magnificent edifice was sin; the fiend who applied the torch in incendiary lust was Satan. Gen. 3 tells us about this, the worst of all disasters in human history. Man is a ruin because he lost the image of God, righteousness, spiritual understanding, and instead of these high endowments, one sees in him attachment to sin and wickedness, perverseness of judgment, spiritual darkness. Will the structure be rebuilt? That is the question we ask with anxious hearts. Not merely others, but we ourselves are vitally concerned in this subject. Thank God, our reply can be in the affirmative. In the doctrine of sanctification we are told about this work of restoration. Our text speaks of that doctrine.

Sanctification.

1. *Our sanctification is a miracle of divine grace.*
2. *The works which we as sanctified beings are to perform have been prepared by God Himself.*

1.

Eph. 2 Paul speaks of appalling ruins and of the work of rebuilding — of man's sad natural condition, vv. 1—3, and the work of restoration, vv. 4—10. It will be noticed that he is referring to Christians, contrasting the past and the present in their lives. The argument of the apostle is: Formerly you were entirely the slaves of sin, not a spark of spiritual life was in you; then something happened, God intervened and made you spiritually alive by creating faith in you. In this manner you were saved and made children of God. By doing this for you He created you unto good works.

Are we justified in listing our text among those passages that treat of sanctification? The word "sanctification" is not used. It must be remembered, sanctification means the act of making holy, of making one able to serve God in deeds that are acceptable to Him. When this is borne in mind, it is plain that our passage is pertinent.

Let us dig a little more deeply into the text. "We are God's workmanship." When God made Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and man became a living soul, then, in every sense of the word, Adam was God's workmanship, His creature. What a remarkable product of divine artistry man represented, perfect in body and soul, the image of his Maker. The greatness of God, His omnipotence, wisdom, and love manifested themselves in this work. Cf. Ps. 139, 14. But it is evident that Paul is not speaking of the grand exhibition of divine power in Eden, for he refers to Christians exclusively.

In the case of the believers, says the apostle, an extraordinary event has occurred — they have experienced another creation; they have been made over. Paul is speaking of conversion or regeneration. It is altogether a divine work, says he. Man did as little to bring it about as did Adam to accomplish his own creation. The teaching called synergism, which says that man cooperates with God in this great undertaking, is plainly a gross violation of Scripture truth.

Note furthermore that Paul says it was a creation in Christ Jesus. When we came to have faith in Jesus, then the great spiritual change occurred.

But the emphasis here lies on the purpose of the creation. We are created unto good works. Just as Adam was created to be active, to govern the earth which God had made and ornamented so gorgeously, so we Christians are to be active, namely, in good works. The spiritual life is to show itself in deeds that are pleasing to God.

Think for a minute of all that happened when the spiritual creation took place. The minute that God kindled the flame of faith in you conversion occurred. In that minute, too, you were justified, and all your sins were forgiven. In that minute, furthermore, the work of sanctification, of true service of God, began in you.

Perhaps some one thinks that God gave us faith merely for the purpose that we thereby might seize the forgiveness of sins and thus be enabled to enter heaven. That is an altogether wrong view. Certainly, when God bent down in love and bestowed faith, His intention was that we should thereby lay hold of His pardon. But this does not exhaust His purpose in converting man. He furthermore intended to make us beings that are active, that will serve and obey Him, keeping the Ten Commandments, and in that manner exalt the great God who has fashioned us anew.

The man who manufactures a machine wants it to function, to run, to do certain work. What a disappointment if he makes a clock, very ingeniously puts the various parts together, but the product will not run when it is wound. It would be the same if we found a Christian in whom the process of sanctification is not under way.

God be praised! by every true believer works of sanctification are being done. God is not such a poor workman that He will produce a machine which is worthless. That new life which He has put into the Christian is really life; there is breathing, the blood is coursing through the veins, there is other activity. The heart entertains pure, wholesome thoughts, the mouth glorifies God, the hands and feet do works of mercy and love. In this way God rebuilds the structure destroyed by sin in Paradise.

Let no one say that we are here speaking of impossible things. The Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Divine power is dwelling in his heart and is always impelling him to do good. The glory and the credit, of course, belong to Him of whom Paul says that "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure."

Are not the converted people of whom the Bible speaks pictured to us as men and women that are engaged in works of sanctification? When the three thousand in Jerusalem had embraced Christ on the day of Pentecost, they began to share their good things, the well-to-do taking care of the poor. Paul is converted, and at once we read of him that he prayed. The jailer in Philippi accepts the Good News with a believing heart, and at that very hour he takes Paul and Silas into his house, washes their stripes, and sets meat before them. Acquila and Priscilla get to be disciples of Jesus, and we read that they laid down their necks for the life of Paul, enduring dangers for his safety, Rom. 16, 4. Here let every one examine himself. If his faith is genuine, it will busy itself with works of sanctification.

But I cannot keep the commandments, hard though I try, says one. Right, brother. Sin remains in us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage; but as surely as you are a believer, you have the desire to serve your heavenly Master, you lament over your transgressions, and you will in spite of frequent failures perform works that are in keeping with His will.

2.

There is another great statement about sanctification contained in the text, namely, that God Himself has prepared the works which we as sanctified people are to perform. If sanctification means service of God, or the doing of holy works, then every one concerned about his sanctification will wish to know which the works are that can be called good, proper, right, holy.

Some might think that all those works are good and holy which will not bring a person into conflict with the civil authorities. That is a very low view to take, because the State does not forbid all things that are wrong, but merely such things as interfere with the happiness and well-being of other individuals and society in general.

Others may hold that good works are all those that are praised by the average man. Such a view is unsatisfactory. Who is the average man? is one question that would immediately arise. Besides, the judgment of the average man after the Fall is altogether unreliable.

Perhaps somebody else thinks that if there is a hard, difficult, painful task, it certainly is a work of sanctification. That was the view of many people during the Middle Ages. It is the view on which asceticism and monasticism, the life of monks and nuns, is based. Such people themselves select the works which they label good. But this conception is condemned by our Lord in clear terms in Mark 7, 7. Cf. Col. 2, 18—23.

A better answer to our question would be that all those works belong to the category of good works which a Christian performs owing to the influence of the Holy Spirit. This answer is absolutely correct. Whatever the Holy Spirit in us impels us to do cannot but be God-pleasing. But the Christian still has sin dwelling in his person. How can I know that when my fellow-Christian does a certain thing, this act of his is not the outflow of the weakness still inherent in him rather than of the indwelling of the Spirit? An objective, firm, definitive norm, or standard, is very desirable, yea, necessary.

Our text points to such a standard. God has in advance prepared the good works which we are to do. The meaning is that in His counsel He has determined them and that in the Scriptures He has given us information on this His counsel and will. When we read the Scriptures, we are told about the good works which our great God contemplated long ago, which He fixed and determined, and in which He takes delight.

We see that God in rebuilding the edifice He reared on the sixth day of creation is not leaving matters to caprice or chance. Just as He gives us the power of performing the works of sanctification, so He directs us by His Word as to the acts with which we as sanctified children of the Father in heaven should serve Him.

Does not this contradict the statement made before that the Spirit impels us in these works? Not at all. The Spirit works by means of the Word of God, Gal. 3, 2.

It is a great thought — God rebuilding our ruined nature through sanctification. Are we resisting, or are we grateful, joyful, seizing the hand that is leading us forward on the path of godliness? Let us grow in sanctification by the study of the Scriptures, praying to God ever to shed on us more abundantly His Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us.

W. Arndt.

The Resurrection of the Body.

John 5, 28. 29.

The Christian Church has put into its chief and oldest creed the words, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," indicating thereby that it holds the doctrine of the resurrection to be an important, a vital one. It is a doctrine which is ridiculed by unbelievers and by many so-called Christians, people who are guided by their reason rather than by the Word of God. To reason this doctrine is offensive, that is true. When the body has been destroyed, it seems impossible that it should come back to life. To emphasize their unbelief, many of those who reject the Christian teaching give orders that their bodies after death be cremated and perhaps that the ashes be thrown into the ocean or into some river. Over against such an attitude we Christians simply place ourselves on the Scriptures and say, "It is written." Let that be our sentiment to-day as we, on the basis of our text, speak of the subject alluded to —

The Resurrection of the Body.

1. *That the resurrection will occur is an incontrovertible fact.*
2. *It will take place on the Day of Judgment.*
3. *It will have a twofold character: to some it will be a resurrection of life, to others a resurrection of damnation.*

1.

Jesus, in the great discourse from which our text is taken, tells the Jews about the high honor which God has bestowed on Him. Among the things He mentions is the power to give life to those that hear His Word and believe. In that remarkable statement He is alluding to the work which He performs through the Gospel, when He leads men who are spiritually dead to the possession of spiritual life. Jesus then adds another grand declaration, namely, that God has made Him the Judge of the living and of the dead. These statements, coming from a person who apparently was a human being like themselves, must have appeared very astonishing to the Jews. On their countenances, as they listened to Him, there must have been depicted amazement. At any rate, wonder and doubt were surging in their hearts. Then Jesus said to them, "Marvel not," etc.

The meaning evidently is, Be not surprised, for it is absolutely true that at some hour in the future a great event will take place: the dead now lying in the graves will come forth, and this will be brought about through the voice of the Son of Man, the Messiah.

The doctrine which Jesus here expresses does not merely state that the soul is immortal and will continue to exist after death. Such teaching is not specifically Christian; it was the teaching of Greek philosophers, such as Plato. It is a teaching which rests on the natuarl knowledge of religion which every man has in his bosom; for among the things that man still does know after the Fall is this truth, that death does not end everything for him, that there is a life beyond the grave, and that after death judgment will come upon him. While this teaching expresses a great and important truth, it will be noticed that the text goes beyond it.

The Lord speaks of those in the grave and of their coming forth. Evidently, then, He is referring, not to the soul, which is in heaven or hell after death, but to the body. The great teaching here proclaimed is that the bodies now in the graves will come back to life. We are aware that these bodies are resting in widely different areas; that they are to be found all over our globe; that they are in very different conditions as far as their state of preservation is concerned, some being well kept, others apparently totally destroyed and dissolved into their atoms, some buried in the sands of the desert, others resting at the bottom of the deep ocean. They shall all come forth. Read the magnificent description Rev. 20, 12. 13, where death and hell (Hades) are merely terms referring to the great beyond.

On that day, then, there will come forth, for instance, the patriarchs, who have been sleeping many centuries; the great prophets of the Old Testament; the twelve apostles; the martyrs, whose bodies were torn and devoured in arenas; John Huss, whose body was burned at the stake and whose ashes were strewn into the Rhine; Luther from his resting-place in front of the pulpit in the church at Wittenberg, etc.

The body that will be raised will be the same body that perished, says Holy Scripture. Cf. Job 19, 25. The apostle Paul discusses the matter at length 1 Cor. 15. It is true, so St. Paul points out, a transformation will take place in the bodies of Christians, just as there is a change in the grain that is sown and produces new grain. But barring this fact, the body raised will be the same that was laid into the grave.

How can this be, says the rationalist, when the bodies in the majority of cases have been dissolved into their atoms and these have entered new combinations and formed new organisms? That question we cheerfully leave to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ. We notice that the text says, it is the voice of Christ which will do these great things. He that in the beginning by a mere word called everything into existence can well give back to us the body with which we died. On the question how He will do it we have nothing to say, leaving this point to His almighty power; but that He will do it we gladly confess on the basis of the Scriptures.

That Christ can perform this miracle He proved not only by raising various dead people during His visible sojourn here on earth, but especially by His own resurrection.

How futile, then, is the effort of all those who think they can frustrate the revivifying mandate of our Lord on the Last Day by having their bodies cremated and their ashes flung to the four winds. Do they really think that they can in this manner escape the hand of the almighty God?

To us Christians this doctrine of the resurrection of the body is very comforting. Death is something unnatural. When soul and body are separated, violence is done to our humanity, a violence which is due to sin; but gratefully we can say that this separation is not to be an everlasting one: it will be ended when the voice of Jesus orders the resurrection of all those that are in the graves.

2.

The text has something to say as to the time when this remarkable event will happen. “The hour cometh.” It is a definite time when the great resurrection event will take place, an hour fixed in the counsel of God.

The dead, then, will not come back to life at various times, some sooner, some later, but they will all be raised at the time of the Judgment. Cf. the grand description of the Judgment scene in Matt. 25, 31. 32, where the resurrection is implied. Cf. also Rev. 20, 11 ff., where the opening of the books and the judging of all men is connected with the resurrection of all the dead. Paul likewise connects the resurrection with the Day of Judgment, 1 Thess. 4, 5 ff. The Thessalonians had been worrying about the future of their loved ones who had died before the coming of the Lord, which they expected to occur very soon. Were not these their dear friends and relatives at least at a great disadvantage? Would they not lack some of the glory which the other believers would be clothed with? Paul comforts them. The events will happen in the following order, says he: The Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will be heard, and then there will take place the resurrection; the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then all believers will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so will they ever be with the Lord.

The precise time of the event, of course, has not been revealed to us. Cf. Mark 13, 32; Acts 1, 7. But that the hour may be near at hand is clear from passages like 1 Pet. 4, 7; 1 John 2, 18. Let us, then, always be prepared for it. The day may not be distant when suddenly all the machinery of the universe will stop, the whole vast structure collapse, the great revivifying command of Christ resound through the world, the graves open, and the dead arise.

3.

Jesus has one more statement in our text bearing on the subject before us. He says the resurrection will be a twofold one as far as the results are concerned. While the hour is the same for all, to some the resurrection will mean the entrance into life and to others the entrance into damnation.

Yes, on that day will come the great division. Men are divided into two classes here on earth before the all-seeing eye of God. Before the eyes of men, however, they are mixed, forming one vast multitude. When they die, at once the great division takes place for their souls, some going to Abraham's bosom, others into hell and torment. But this, too, is hidden from the eyes of those that live here on earth. The bodies are lying aside of each other here in the same cemeteries under the same sod, the same trees waving over them in many cases. This situation will be changed when that hour comes.

Christ dwelt on this point at various times. Cf. the story of the ten virgins and the Judgment scene, Matt. 25. Cf. also the parable in Matt. 13, 24 ff. We have to look for a minute at the description of those who through the resurrection enter into life and those who through the resurrection enter into damnation. The former are those that have done good, the latter those that have done evil. This does not mean, of course, that the resurrection of life is earned or merited by good works. Heaven, salvation, is a gift of God, which we lay hold of by means of faith. There is only one thing that saves, and that is the merit of Christ, which we accept when we believe in Him as our Substitute; and there is only one thing that condemns, namely, unbelief. In our text, Jesus merely describes the two classes of men as to their activities in this life. The believers, having the Spirit of God in their hearts, do good, serving God with a grateful heart. The unbelievers, rejecting the influence of God's Spirit, do evil and cannot do anything that is truly good, because the source of all good works, God's Holy Spirit, is not dwelling in them.

Let all this not be something merely theoretical for us. These truths are spread before us for a practical purpose. Our eternal welfare is in the balances. Let us all see that the one way to the resurrection of life is Christ, the only Savior. W. ARNDT.

FIVE IMPRESSIVE WORDS OF PAUL.

"What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?"

Acts 9, 6.

Two of the outstanding words in our language to-day are the words *progress* and *change*. The so-called modern man and woman use these terms very often. We speak of the progress made down through the centuries in art, science, mechanics, culture, jurisprudence, as men have learned more of the earth's secrets, *e. g.*, aeronautics, radio, etc.

In our boasting, however, about the progress and change that has taken place we must be careful to limit the application of these words to their proper fields. One bald fact stands out to challenge the attention of thoughtful men and women the world over: man has made no progress morally. Spiritually he has not changed from his forefathers. The world is still a melting-pot of sin. A glance into a daily newspaper verifies this statement.

Since mankind has not changed morally, it behooves us to remember that sin to-day is still abominable in the sight of God, just as it was in the distant past. God's attitude towards sin has not changed, and God still hates sin, although He loves the sinner. "The wages of sin is death" in our day just as true as it was in the days of Noah and the Flood. But, God be praised! we still have the ancient promise of mercy. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. 33, 11. To prove that these are not mere idle words, God has put in motion here upon earth a tremendous force that seeks to turn the sinner from his wicked way. I refer to the preaching of His holy Word. The preaching of God's Law and Gospel has demonstrated its divine power upon human hearts down through the centuries and still demonstrates it to-day. It is through the power of this Word of God that such a state of mind is produced as we see in the man speaking here in our text. Thank God, we still have with us such humble penitents, men and women, alarmed about their sins and seeking forgiveness at the Throne of Grace. It is for the special consolation and guidance of such that I wish to speak to you to-day upon the theme which our text presents: —

A Penitent Sinner Cries to God and is Heard.

Three points shall demand our serious attention. We shall show: —

1. *That this man crying to God in our text was a great sinner;*
2. *That this man in terror and alarm repented of his sins and cried to God for help;*
3. *That this penitent sinner's cry was heard by his God.*

1.

a) We know that Paul was a sinner because sin is universal, Ps. 51, 5; John 3, 6; Rom. 7, 18; Eph. 2, 3. Paul was no exception, and you are no exception, 1 John 1, 8.

b) Furthermore, we know that Paul was a great sinner because of his deeds. (Here the speaker should relate Paul's activity in persecuting the Christians: the stoning of Stephen, the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, and the contemplated havoc to be wrought in Damascus. Point out that Paul was a persecutor of Christ, a blasphemer, 1 Tim. 1, 13, and a murderer, who had broken both tables of the Law.)

c) This Paul of our text was a great sinner in spite of his heritage. He was a son of Abraham, the father of the faithful, one of God's chosen people, but still a great sinner. Sinner, are you basking in the sunlight of a Christian heritage, thinking you are one of the favored ones? Are you saying to yourself: "I am the son of a long line of true Christians. I know God accepts me"? Sinner, beware! Abraham's faith did not save Paul; the faith of a Christian mother will not save you. You, too, must repent of your sins, Matt. 25, 8—12.

d) Again, this man was a great sinner in spite of his church connections. Paul was a member of the Jewish Church, in good standing, active in its work, etc., Phil. 3, 4—6; Gal. 1, 14. Yet a great sinner. Many likewise to-day rest entirely upon the foundation of church-membership. They say: "I'm a Lutheran by birth and choice. We Lutherans are strictly orthodox and have the unadulterated Word and Sacraments," and with thoughts such as these they may fail to recognize their sinfulness. Mere external church-membership is no substitute for saving faith. (The speaker should be guided here by his local conditions. Point out that church-members, too, must be penitents.)

e) This man was a great sinner even though filled with religious zeal. Paul was burning with zeal and was persecuting the Christians. Thus to-day many in the heat of religious fervor persecute the faithful, John 16, 2; Rom. 10, 2. 3. Do not be deceived by zeal. You may be zealous, but wrong and thus do more harm than good. Zeal is no atonement for sin. No one had greater religious zeal than Jezebel, but few women are more wicked than that monster of iniquity was.

2.

And yet *this great sinner,* Paul, *repented.*

a) Some sinners live securely and impenitent until something extraordinary happens to make them alarmed. Such was the case with Paul. Sometimes it is sickness, financial trouble, or death. But whatever it may be, sinner, by all means recognize it as the handwriting of God on the wall warning you to repent, Dan. 5, 24; Gen. 42, 21.

b) Let us remember, however, that terror and alarm is not in itself repentance. Many sinners become terrified and alarmed and still go to hell. Such a one was Judas. The purpose of terror is to drive us into the arms of Jesus for salvation and peace. Let it not drive you to hell and perdition. When terror comes, faith must take terror by the hand and say: "Come, let us go to Jesus; He will not cast us out. He loves the sinner. He said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He came to seek and to save that which was lost." The crucial time in life is when terror grips your heart because of your sins. Learn of Paul and act wisely. Repent while you have the opportunity.

c) That Paul was a true penitent we know from his cry. Impenitent sinners never cry to Jesus *for help.* They go on in sullen despair, commit suicide, or curse God. Pharaoh. Cain. Saul. Judas.

Paul was a penitent. In his cry we recognize *faith.* He now knew that this Jesus whom he had persecuted was none other than the Son of God, the Savior of mankind.

Paul's cry was furthermore *a cry for guidance.* Penitent sinners greatly need God's help. They are new-born lambs, glared upon by the ravening wolves of Satan's kingdom. Satan seeks to accomplish their overthrow. But they are safe in the protection of their Savior if they but call to Him for guidance.

That Paul was a penitent we know from the fact that *he trusted entirely in God's mercy.* He made no overtures to God for salvation. He did not seek to get it by making a mere pledge for better conduct. Paul could well sing: —

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

d) Listen to this cry again, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Here was *submission to the will of God.* A penitent sinner submitting to his Father's will; breaking with his sinful life; saying good-by to all that had been his treasure in the past, and facing a new future, Phil. 3, 7. Here was a man reborn, 1 Pet. 1, 23; a sinner saved, Gal. 1, 14—16.

I plead with you to-day, Do as Paul did, cry out to Jesus for help. He will hear you. He knows your troubles and your sins. He loves you. He has saved you by the blood of Christ from eternal damnation. Come and see how the cry of *this great sinner* was heard.

3.

This penitent sinner's cry was *heard by his God.*

a) We are willing to admit that some cries for help are never heard: the cries of the heathen addressed to idols; the cries of the false prophets to Baal, 1 Kings 18, 27—29. But cries addressed to Jesus are heard. He heard the cry of Paul. He heard the cries of the blind while on earth, of the lepers, of the widows, of the mourners. And those cries were answered. The lame were made to walk, the dumb mouth began to speak. The lepers were cleansed, and the penitents were forgiven. And now as He sits at the right hand of the Father, He still hears the cry of the penitents and answers them, Rom. 10, 13.

b) Some cries of men are heard, but cannot be answered because of circumstances: of the wounded on the battle-fields; of the dying in the land of famine. Thank God, such is not the case with the penitents. Salvation has been prepared. Matt. 22, 4. Men's sins have been atoned for. God has been reconciled. We have been redeemed. And no circumstances stand in the way of the penitents. Jesus can answer their cry. Even while on the cross, nailed hand and foot, He was able to save the penitent thief from hell. Should not this encourage the doubting sinner? Mark 5, 36.

c) Again, we are reminded of the fact that some cries are heard and that every effort is made to help, but without avail. Power is lacking on the part of those who seek to help. Cases in point are the sick. At the bedside of the patient stands the helpless surgeon and physician as the dread cancer slowly eats away a human life. "O Doctor, can't you help me?" is the heartrending cry of many a dying man. But not so with the penitent. He has a Helper who is Master of the universe. The stars stand still at His command. When He speaks, the storms cease their raging. The sick are made whole. The dead are raised up. There is nothing too hard for Him. Dear penitent, behold your Helper with confidence. Your case is not too hard for Him, Matt. 28, 18; Luke 1, 37; Is. 1, 18.

d) Finally, the cries addressed to Jesus by penitents will be heard because Jesus has promised just that, Luke 11, 13. Hearing the penitent is the Lord's greatest pleasure. Paul's case was not the exception, it was the rule. When did Jesus while here upon earth ever turn a deaf ear to a crying heart? The sweetest song that was ever sung was the song of the penitent to whom Jesus said: "Arise, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And here in our text we find such a penitent lying in the dust on an ancient road, crying to Jesus for help; and, behold, his cry is answered. In the dead stillness of an Oriental midday God speaks from heaven to a penitent sinner with these comforting words: "Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Jesus never turned a deaf ear to the penitents. He is profoundly interested in them. He has shed His blood for them, suffered death for them. He has paid the penalty of their guilt. He has reconciled them with their God. And when they cry, He hears them. To them He says: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee," Ps. 50, 15. "God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. 2, 4. And to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, He has sent out His Gospel-bearers into all the world with the message of forgiveness. Baptism has been instituted for their cleansing, and the Holy Supper is given for the strengthening of their faith.

Application. — Dear sinner, Jesus will hear your cry, too. He loves you just as He did Paul. He is able to save you in spite of your sins. He even now has gone to prepare a place for you. And He will come again to take you unto Himself if you will confess Him as your Lord and Savior. Turn to Him to-day, and when the Day of Judgment shall come, you need have no fear; your name will be read from the Book of Life, and this Jesus will say unto you: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen. VIRTUS GLOE.

"God Commandeth All Men Everywhere to Repent."

Acts 17, 22—31.

Saint Paul at Athens — what an inspiring subject! What a momentous occasion! This great exponent of Christianity in the stronghold of idolatry! The greatest city of art and of man's wisdom invaded by that mighty preacher of the Gospel, the wisdom of God — St. Paul at Athens!

The apostle had come to this city on his second missionary journey. He tarried here while waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. Here Paul saw everywhere the evidences of gross idolatry. Along the streets and atop the houses and public buildings there were innumerable statues of the gods and goddesses of Athens. "Pliny tells us, at this time Athens had over 3,000 public statues, besides countless images in private houses. Every gateway and porch had its protecting god. Petronius sneers: 'At Athens it is easier to find a god than a man.' Xenophon said all Athens was one altar to the gods. Sophocles, in his *Oedipus Coloneus,* declares Athens to be preeminently celebrated for its reverence of the gods. Plato's *Alcibiades* tells us the Athenians 'served the gods with more pomp and splendor than all Grecians besides.'"

The sight made Paul's heart burn within him. He determined to bring to these men the light of the Gospel. But he was not well received by these Stoic and Epicurean philosophers of Athens. Some of them said: "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." And certainly, they had gods a-plenty! Others contemptuously said: "What will this babbler say?" A babbler in their language was a man who picked up the rubbish that others had thrown away. They took him therefore and brought him unto Areopagus, their famous court on Mars Hill for a hearing.

St. Paul was placed on the Stone of Impudence, from which the defendants were wont to plead their cause. Other great men had stood in this court before. "Here Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates had been tried and condemned on similar accusations of setting forth strange gods." Would St. Paul share the fate of these men?

What a setting for Paul's sermon! Few preachers had such a setting or such a critical audience. As Paul stood, there rose up to the east, directly before him, the Acropolis to a height of 300 feet, crowned with the beautiful Parthenon, one of the most beautiful works of art ever reared on this earth. To his right lay the agora, or market place, surrounded with its colonnades, lecture halls, and temples, all crowned with hundreds of statues of Greek heroes and gods. For an audience there were gathered the *élite* of the wisest of the world. Before them stood the man who was beginning to turn the world upside down, the man who gloried in nothing save in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Of the three things most ardently desired by St. Augustine, one was to hear Paul preach at Athens. Can we blame him?

What did Paul preach? May God's Spirit now graciously bless our consideration of —

Saint Paul's Sermon at Athens.

1. *Paul paints a sad picture of the present condition of the Athenians.*
2. *He shows them how God in nature and providence has revealed Himself.*
3. *He climaxes by showing that the only way to God is through Christ.*

1.

a) Paul begins: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." St. Paul told these Athenians that they were indeed religious after a fashion, but a very poor fashion. "I am amazed to see these thousands of statues of your gods and goddesses and your innumerable altars. Every hero of your nation, yes, every human virtue and passion, I find deified in your midst."

b) Paul proceeds to show his audience the absurdity of such worship, v. 23. The altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God." What a sad confession! Athens was —

> The shining city
> Full of all knowledge and a god unknown.

A legend says: "Epimenides ended a pestilence by ordering the Athenians to let go white and black sheep from the Areopagus and where each lay down to sacrifice them to the unknown god who sent the pestilence." It was such an altar that Paul had seen. They worshiped what they knew not. St. Paul means to say: "What a sad, sad condition do I find you Athenians in! You are known the world over for your learning in worldly things, and yet you are groping in spiritual darkness. You admit you are serving a god whom you know not. Let me declare this true God to you. You accuse me of setting forth new gods. No, my friends; you have demons and gods enough already. But the only true God, whom you worship ignorantly, whom you confess you know not, Him I will now declare unto you."

In their false religion he finds a point of contact which is based upon truth. If men rear an altar to, and worship, an unknown God, they thereby admit that God *is*. With this truth, which they must admit, Paul begins and enters the wedge of the Word of God into their hearts. St. Paul denies or compromises no truth. What a wise missionary was St. Paul! All missionaries may here learn a lesson from him.

c) The sad condition of the Athenians truly reflects the natural condition of all men. St. Paul saw here before his very eyes what he wrote later to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 2, 14; and to the Ephesians, Eph. 2, 1; and to the Romans, Rom. 8, 7.

Man by nature is still the same to-day: spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God. In our day, men have made great strides in science and invention — the radio, automobile, air-ship, or submarine. Men rise on wings above the clouds or sink at will into the depths of the sea; they turn the darkness of night into day and send their speech and music thousands of miles through the air. Because of this progress, men speak of an improvement of the human race. Yet, *spiritually* there has been no improvement. The same lusts and vices and passions move man's heart to-day as of old. Science cannot change the heart. In fact, the more highly educated a criminal, the more dangerous he is. Science and inventions are glorious blessings of God, but they do not lead a man to cease from sin. Man's heart is still the same foul, corrupt, and rebellious thing it has ever been. (Make personal application.)

2.

Now St. Paul shows his hearers how God in nature and providence has revealed Himself that they might seek and find Him.

a) The apostle directs the attention of his listeners to the book of nature. The work of creation reveals a personal God, not a multitude of deities, v. 24a. By the visible proofs you may come to see the invisible Being and be convinced of His eternal power and Godhead. By one God was the whole universe created.

This is a new doctrine to the Athenians. Their great Aristotle had taught them that matter is eternal, not created. And the followers of Epicure, who made up a large part of St. Paul's present audience, had been taught by their teacher that the world was an accidental bunch of atoms.

Point out the folly of modern evolutionists, who teach that the universe evolved out of an original protoplasm, or primordial cell. "An infidel friend visited the great astronomer Kirchner and asked who had made the very beautiful celestial globe he saw in a corner of the room. 'It is not mine, and I do not think anybody made it. It must have come there by chance and of its own accord.' 'Nonsense! Why such a reply?' 'Why, you cannot believe that this little, imperfect piece of workmanship sprang into existence of itself; how, then, can you imagine that the glorious heavens, which this merely represents, could have sprung into being of their own accord?' The infidel became a servant of God."

b) V. 24b and v. 25. Since God is the Creator and Ruler of the whole universe, it follows that He does not live in temples made with hands and that He does not need the sacrifices as ministering to His need. Here Paul begins to pound to pieces the very foundation of

Athenian idolatry. Theirs was a religion of temples and idols and sacrifices. He shows that all this is contrary to the very nature of God.

c) St. Paul next points out another doctrine that is entirely new in the ears of these wise philosophers, v. 26. They thought they had sprung out of their own soil. They believed that each nation has its patron deities, who lead their people on in war and fight for them for victory. But St. Paul teaches them that there is but one true God, who provides for and guides all men. This one God has made all men of one parentage and appoints to all nations their place and their sphere of activity.

(Point out here the folly of racial pride.)

d) God's divine purpose in history is to lead all men to seek Him if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, v. 27. — Show this divine purpose in the history of Israel. (Moses 40 years in wilderness; Israel 40 years in the desert; Israel during the period of the judges: Israel sinned, is punished, repented, is delivered.)

Application. — God's providence in our life.

e) But man is so corrupt by nature that he will not seek God, but serves sin. The tendrils of a plant growing in a dark place reach out towards the light, but man prefers spiritual darkness to the light. John 1, 5: "The darkness comprehended it not."

Illustrate this natural corruption of man by the general corruption of man before the Flood.

Where God's purpose toward man is not realized it is because of man's stubbornness and corruption.

f) But this is not God's, but man's fault. God is not hiding Himself. In fact, He is not far from every one of us, vv. 27. 28. In Him we live and move and have our being. You heathen Athenians think you need idols that God in them might be near you. But God is a spirit who is not far from every one of us. God breathed His own breath into man's nostrils, and thus man became a living soul. Paul here cites Greek poetry to show these Athenians that their own poets agree with him, v. 28. Cleanthes sings in his hymn to Zeus: "For we thine offspring are." And Aratus of Tarsus, Paul's countryman, in his *Phaenomena:* "For we, too, are his offspring."

From these citations the apostle shows that even natural man has a certain knowledge of God, of His omnipresence and omnipotence in the preservation of all things created. But this knowledge is but a groping in the dark. Natural man by this dim knowledge is convinced of God's eternal power and Godhead, has also a certain knowledge of the Law, but he does not know how to be saved from the curse and condemnation of God's Law. This light is revealed only in the Gospel of Christ. Therefore Paul climaxes by showing the only way to God is through Christ.

3.

a) God winked at the times of this ignorance, v. 30, *i. e.*, God had forbearance with the nations of the earth notwithstanding their sinful ignorance; He did not punish them at once, as they deserved it, but continued to give them His good gifts. But now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Their ignorance is *sinful* ignorance. Repentance implies sin. Therefore ignorance of God and His will is not innocence. And all men must repent, for sin is universal. All are in like condemnation. Stoics and Epicureans and devout worshipers of Pallas Athene and Zeus.

b) Here Paul shows himself the great ambassador of Christ and drives home the reason to enforce this command of repentance. For, says he, God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, *viz.*, Christ. The thought of this great and terrible Judgment to come should lead all men to repent of their sin and consider the things that belong to their peace.

c) Now St. Paul swings into his main theme, *viz.*, to preach Christ and Him crucified as the only hope of salvation from the Judgment to come, v. 31 and Rom. 1, 16. "Whereof God hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him [*viz.*, Christ] from the dead." Paul now wishes to develop his climax, to show the riches of God's grace, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He would offer them salvation without money and without price. Paul would now tell these Athenians: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation," 2 Cor. 5, 19. "In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace," Eph. 1, 7.

At this juncture, however, it seems Paul's preaching was interrupted by the mocking cries of his audience, for we read, vv. 32. 33: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them."

d) What, then, was the result of this wonderful sermon of Paul on Mars Hill?

1. We read, v. 34: "Certain men clave unto him and believed, among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. These few became the nucleus of the church that grew up in Athens. Dionysius the Areopagite, according to tradition, became the first bishop of Athens. This illustrates the word: "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven," etc., Is. 55, 10. 11.

2. The large majority of Paul's audience, however, rejected the Gospel of Christ, did not believe. Perhaps St. Paul thought of this scene on Mars Hill when he later wrote to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 1, 23: "But we preach Christ Crucified, . . . unto the Greeks foolishness," and v. 26 ff.: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," etc.

Some of the men on Mars Hill said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." But they never heard Paul again. Paul departed, never to return. How near salvation had come to them! But they failed to improve their opportunity and were lost. When the five foolish virgins came back, the door was shut; shut never to be opened again. Let us take warning. Now is the appointed time, now is the season of grace. Therefore, to-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Let us consider now the things that belong to our peace. To-morrow it may be too late. In simple faith cling to Christ, your only Salvation, and thus have a comfort and hope that will never fail or perish, but will endure throughout the ages of eternity. J. A. LEIMER.

"Testifying Repentance toward God and Faith toward Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 20, 20. 21.

Refer to series. These words of Paul are impressive because they were uttered by him under exceptional circumstances. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem. Having resolved to reach the city before Pentecost, he had "determined to sail by Ephesus," v. 16, where he had labored for three years. Finding, however, that his ship had to stop at Miletus for a few days, he sent to Ephesus and requested the elders of the church there to come and see him at Miletus. They gladly responded to his invitation, and when they had come, he delivered to them the farewell address from which our text has been chosen. Saying farewell to loved ones, especially if it is for life, vv. 25. 38, is an affecting occurrence, frequently the occasion for the utterance of profound truths, *e. g.*, Moses' parting words to the tribes of Israel; Christ's last words to the disciples. For depth of pathos and fervor, Paul's parting words to the elders are seldom rivaled even in Holy Scripture.

These words of Paul are impressive because they were spoken by him at a time when he received many intimations of the coming upon him of some calamity. He had only recently escaped a plot against his life, v. 3. In every city the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited Paul in Jerusalem, v. 23. Words spoken in the shadow of death are as a rule earnest and impressive.

How impressive Paul's words are we see from the effect which they had upon the elders: "And they all wept sore," v. 37.

They are impressive not only for the reason that they were pronounced under unusual circumstances, but also because of their import. They are therefore worth considering, for in these words Paul answers the question: —

What of All Things Is Most Profitable?

The apostle's answer is: —

1. *Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is most profitable;*
2. *Wherein the profit consists;*
3. *The duty of those who have gained this blessing and profit.*

1.

Declaring that he has kept back nothing that was profitable unto the Ephesians, Paul mentions repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, implying thereby that he considers repentance and faith most profitable. Repentance and faith he declares to have been the essence of all that he had "showed," "taught," and "testified" during his three years at Ephesus.

a) Repentance toward God. To repent means to change one's mind. The attitude of natural man toward himself and his actions is one of approval. When this attitude of self-approval changes to an attitude of self-condemnation, when self-estimation undergoes a change, when a sinner grows dissatisfied with himself and his past life, he changes his mind, he repents.

However, not all repentance is profitable. There may be repentance without a thought of God. Regret over a misdeed may be genuine, resolutions to amend a sinful life sincere; but if they are inspired solely by the evil temporal consequences of the misdeed, they are unprofitable. True repentance is concern over sin in relation to God. True repentance recognizes sin to be primarily a transgression of the Law of God, an affront against divine majesty, meriting God's wrath, temporal death, and eternal damnation. Regret over sin merely because of such evil consequences as ruined health, loss of good name, imprisonment, etc., are not profitable.

There may also be "repentance" *away* from God. A sinner recognizing the shame of sin, which is transgression of God's Law meriting eternal death, may come to hate God, because he fears the punishment of God. Men hate those whom they fear. Such "repentance" frequently leads to despair, *e. g.,* Saul, Judas.

Repentance to be profitable must be *toward* God, as Paul has it in our text. This implies faith. Sorrow for sin is worth having only when faith is added. Could our zeal no respite know, could our tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Christ must save, and He alone.

b) For this reason Paul adds: "And faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Faith defined in Holy Writ as a trusting, grasping, clinging, accepting.

Faith must have an object. Text: "faith toward." There must be something to grasp, cling to, accept. Every reasonable person grants this. According to modern theology, however, it matters little what one believes, so long as one believes. Creeds are denounced as hindrances. "Paul's fault, that Christianity has become cluttered with doctrines." "Away from Paul and back to Christ!" Modern definitions of faith: "Pious feeling," "sweet sentiment," "a religious experience," "a sense of the nearness of God," "a warm spot for that which is good and true." As though it were possible to believe in something without something to believe in, to grasp something without having something to grasp.

Faith must not only have an object, but the true object, if it is to be profitable. Faith dare not rest upon self-righteousness. For this reason Paul "testified to the Jews," v. 21. Faith dare not rest upon the supposition that God is a congenial and jovial Father who smiles with indulgence upon the escapades of his children, which was the Greek conception of the deities, a conception for which there was ample ground in Greek mythology. For this reason Paul "testified also to the Greeks," v. 21. To believe in a lie is not profitable. The faith that profits must rest upon truth. Not any truth, but a particular truth. Faith in the truth that God created heaven and earth not saving faith. Faith in the immortality of the soul not saving faith. Saving faith is "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," v. 21. Not any truth concerning Jesus Christ, *e. g.*, that Jesus Christ was the most perfect man that ever lived, etc., but the particular truth *that Jesus Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me*, etc. 2 Cor. 5, 21; Rom. 4, 5. All this implied in the words "our Lord Jesus Christ."

2.

Wherein the profit consists.

a) Forgiveness of sin. Eph. 1, 7. What a blessing to be rid of the burden of sin! Ps. 32, 1—5.

b) Peace with God, Rom. 5, 1. God no longer reproaches us on account of our sins. Slavish fear of God removed. Our relation to God that of children. We may now address God Abba. If we have peace with God, our conscience will also be at peace.

c) Assurance of God's loving care. Afflictions can no longer frighten us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8, 28—32. The worst affliction, death with its terrors, has been abolished

d) Assurance of eternal salvation. 2 Tim. 1, 12; Rom. 8, 38. 39. If our salvation depended upon our own goodness and righteousness, we could never be sure of salvation. Our certainty of salvation is built on solid ground, on the merit of Jesus Christ and the promises of God. What a glorious light this assurance sheds over life!

Indeed, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ of all things most profitable in this life and the life to come. If men seeking earthly profits would only see it! Therefore

3.

The duty of those who have been thus profited.

a) This profitable "Gospel of the grace of God" not to be kept back, v. 20. Silence may be golden, but not in regard to the glorious Gospel. Peter and John: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts 4, 15—20.

b) Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings to be "showed," "taught," and "testified," v. 20. 21. The accumulation of synonyms indicates that the Gospel is to be spread by all the different means at our disposal. The accumulation of synonyms also indicates that all Christians should be engaged in the task of spreading the Gospel of the grace of God. There is enough work for us all, and there is a special sphere for each. One may find his place in the Sunday-school, another in the home, another in the pulpit, while we are all called everywhere to bear the potent testimony of a holy life.

c) Publicly and from house to house, v. 20.

d) Our duty extends to all men. "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks," v. 21. Home and foreign missions.

G. Mahler.

"I Commend You to God and to the Word of His Grace."

Acts 20, 32.

Text recalls a very touching incident in Paul's career. He had been in many perils, 2 Cor. 11 and 12; but likely no experience of his was more trying and at the same time more elevating than this scene. Here were the elders of the Ephesian church, where he had worked even at the danger of his life, Acts 19. He was now privileged to see the fruit of his hands and the great love of the followers of Christ. How this must have touched and also strengthened the apostle! But he was also now to take leave, never to see their face again, vv. 25. 38. How pathetic this made the parting! We can understand that they all "wept sore," v. 37. Before they knelt down for the final joint prayer, Paul spoke to them a very memorable valedictory (text chapter). We should like to dwell on all the helpful thoughts he has given us therein, but must confine ourselves to a single verse, which epitomizes the address. On such a solemn, impressive occasion we look for words laden with thought, and we shall not be disappointed.

Picture to yourself a parting similar to that of the apostle's; what would *you* have said? Your words should convey comfort, consolation, instruction, hope, helpfulness, — not dejection and despair.

The Apostle's Parting Message

centers in that God whom he had served. Let us follow its simple reading.

1. *Paul commends the Ephesians to God and to the Word of His grace.*
2. *He gives his reasons for so doing.*

1.

A) "And now, brethren, I commend you to God."

1) "Commend" here means to entrust to, commit to, turn over to. The apostle asks his parishioners not to look to *him* in future, but to *God.*

2) Was Paul's faith equal to the occasion? He was now to leave the Ephesians, who had looked for guidance to him. What provisions were to be made for their future lest any be lost? John 17, 6. 9. He commits them to God, knowing that, if they would be in His care, the gates of hell could not prevail against them. Happy a pastor who, leaving a charge, can commend his parishioners to God, Acts 14, 23. Paul had no money to leave them; he had no influence with the ruling class in Ephesus. (His life had been endangered in a riot, Acts 19.) — Some people are very quick to make promises of protection and patronage and frequently disappoint the trusting ones.

3) You all agree that you would feel safe in God's protection and care. Paul in his extremely hazardous missionary travels had tested to the full the power of God's protection and found it fully adequate; so this was no empty phraseology on his part. — The Christian who has *experienced* the goodness of God can speak of it the more effectively. Christ Himself exemplified this, John 3, 11: "We speak that we do *know* and testify that we have *seen.*" John 8, 14. — We value the sayings and writings of a Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, John, for a twofold reason: because they were divinely *inspired* and because the authors spoke from *personal experience.*

We should profit from the experience of others (history), and we should pass on our own experience for the profit of others. Ben Jonson: "The burnt child dreads the fire." How aptly Psalms 23 and 91 depict the protection of God!

B) "And to the Word of His grace."

1) this means the doctrine Paul had preached — none other, Gal. 1, 8. 9.

2) Blessed are you if you are not "carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace," Heb. 13, 9.

3) We have God to thank for the fact — not always fully appreciated — that our pastors and theological faculties with one accord stand firmly on the Word of His grace, unmoved by attacks within and without Christendom.

4) Indeed, it is the Word of His *grace.* Is it not His *grace* which received us into the communion of saints and Holy Baptism, through which we were brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, through which the Law was preached to us that we might come to a true knowledge of our sins and then appreciate the blessing of absolution, and which then aided us in amending our lives and profiting by the experiences of the past?

5) Do you know of a better and safer place to commend your dear ones to than the hands of God and the Word of His grace? The best legacy. The "eternal life insurance," the best and safest investment possible. A mistake, however, to postpone thoughts and actions of this tenor to times of parting. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." *Longfellow:* "Act, act, in the living present, Heart within and God o'erhead."

2.

A) God, through the Word of His grace, "is able to build you up."

1) A congregation is built up by the *means of grace.* True, we should make good use of church organizations, publicity, sociability, financing support, church structures, etc.; for without these the administration and spread of the Word of Grace would be seriously hampered. But externals can build up only externals; for the spiritual we need spiritual means. A congregation is not built up by external growth (in fact, this may be a veneer hiding internal decay); the individual Christian and the aggregation of Christians should grow in the inward man, Rom. 2, 29; 7, 22; 2 Cor. 4, 16. A decline in membership resulting from searching sermons or church discipline may be a mark of inward growth.

2) There is implied in the above ("able to build you up") a petition for peace and quietness, which favors growth, Acts 9, 31. We pray for the peace of the Church in our general prayers, in the Litany, and in the bidding-prayer (hymn-book).

3) It is distinctly the will of God, not only that we should be born again (converted), but that we should be built up (sanctified).

We were created in Christ Jesus *unto good works,* Eph. 2, 10; 1 Thess. 4, 3; 2 Thess. 2, 13.

"Let us in grace and wisdom Grow daily through Thy Word." (Hymn 9, 4.) Not only the individual, the congregation, too, should grow, Eph. 5, 27. And since a congregation is composed of individuals, each one should attend services regularly, ponder the sermon, search the Scriptures, and read the church literature. This regular attendance will give you the whole counsel of God (v. 27) as preached to the hearers in the course of the church-year. We should "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word." But this does not mean that we should forever remain, doctrinally and in Christian experience, like new-born babes; nay, we should "grow thereby," 1 Pet. 2, 2. There is no greater comfort and encouragement than to know that God *will* build us up, Phil. 1, 6.

4) "Which is *able.*" In the original this word signifies *"powerful,"* "dynamic," Rom. 1, 16; 1 Cor. 1, 18. 24. Paul had experienced this dynamic "power of God." His is the most spectacular conversion in the New Testament, a palpable demonstration of the Gospel's power. Remember, Saul of Tarsus abetted the stoning of Stephen; he was not led into persecuting the Church, but was a leading spirit, Acts 8, 3. His was not a passing rage, but he had a deliberate aim and purpose, Acts 9, 1. He carried the persecution beyond the bounds of Jerusalem, Acts 9, 2. Known as the most fanatical persecutor, Acts 9, 13. 26. He confesses as much himself, Acts 22, 3—5; 26, 9—11; Gal. 1, 13.

This bigoted *hater* of Christ was turned into Paul, a most devoted *follower* of Christ. Having "obtained mercy," though being the "chief of sinners," 1 Tim. 1, 12—16, he considered himself "a pattern to them who should hereafter believe." Could you name any other power on earth to effect such a change — turning this proud Pharisee into the humblest of men, causing this self-righteous man to confess himself the greatest of sinners, this conceded leader of orthodox Judaism to consent to be "the offscouring of all things," 1 Cor. 4, 13, and rejoicing, glorying, in the cross, Rom. 5, 3. As an "inducement" to make the change he was shown how great things he must suffer for the sake of Him whom he had persecuted, Acts 9, 16. But this miraculous change in the apostle was wholly "the gift of the grace of God," brought about "by the effectual working of His power," Eph. 3, 7.

5) This same Gospel has the very same power to-day; it is for us to adhere to this same Gospel and to permit the same Spirit to bring forth the same fruit in us as in the apostle, the same in kind if not in degree. (Hymn 2, 2.)

B) "To give you an inheritance."

1) Paul had prayed for the Ephesians (1, 18) that they might know the riches of the inheritance in the saints. He now apparently recalls these words and holds out to his Ephesians the fulfilment. Children inherit the possessions of their parents, Rom. 8, 17; not by purchase or merit or work, Rom. 8, 23 b, and yet by regular process acknowledged legal. The inheritance held out to the Ephesians is a *sure* one, a *rich* one, Eph. 1, 18, our God being abundantly rich; it is above in heaven, John 14, 2.

2) An *inheritance* we think of as something in the future, not obtainable in the present. However, we have an earnest of it already in this life, the sure anticipation, Rom. 8, 38. 39, the testimony that we are the children of God, Rom. 8, 16, and if children, then heirs. For all this we join the apostle, Col. 1, 12—14, in "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," etc.

C) "Among all them which are sanctified."

1) "All them which are sanctified" does not exclude the saints on earth, who through Christ's blood have been cleansed of all their sins and made heirs of salvation together with us.

2) But we shall enter upon our full inheritance among "the saints in light," Col. 1, 12; Eph. 1, 18.

God created man a social being, Gen. 2, 18. Love, hallowed and sanctified, is not only the fulfilling of the Law, it is the very essence of happiness, the divine motive power of our salvation, and for its exercise or functioning it needs an object or objects, being built on reciprocity, or it will degenerate into sordid selfishness. This sanctified love will have its fullest scope and expression among the saints in heaven and in the presence of the Lamb. Meeting those dear ones of ours who have fallen asleep in Christ and being in the company of those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. 7, 9—17, makes heaven a real, a true home. "God be with you till we meet again," in heaven, if not before, is not an empty phrase with the Christian. And this assurance mellowed the parting sorrow of the apostle and the brethren.

3) Serving the Lord here on earth, we shall receive the inheritance as a reward of grace, Col. 3, 24; Heb. 9, 15.

And, brethren, it is "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," 1 Pet. 1, 4.

A. W. MEYER.

"A Conscience Void of Offense toward God and toward Men."

Acts 24, 16.

Our text is taken from the defense of St. Paul before the Roman governor Felix at Caesarea.

How did the apostle come to stand before this court? Only a few weeks before St. Paul had arrived at Jerusalem to make a report of what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry and to hand over a collection of money gathered from among the Gentile Christians for the needy of the congregation at Jerusalem. While in the Temple, he was recognized by some Jews from the province of Asia, who made a tumult, apprehended Paul, and were about to kill him, when the Roman captain Claudius Lysias sent his soldiers just in time to save Paul from a violent death. Paul's request to address the Jews was granted. He spoke of the manner of his wonderful conversion; but upon mention of God's command to him to preach to the Gentiles, the people made a tumult, crying, "Away with such a fellow from the earth for it is not fit that he should live!" The captain ordered Paul to be brought into the castle. The next day the Roman officer commanded the chief priests and all the members of the Council to appear and brought Paul down and set him before them that he might know whereof he was accused by the Jews. This hearing also ended in a riot, and Claudius Lysias ordered his soldiers to go down and take Paul by force from among the Jewish council. The captain, having received word of a plot among the Jews to kill Paul, now ordered a guard of soldiers to take the prisoner and bring him safely from Jerusalem to Caesarea to Governor Felix. After five days, Ananias, the high priest, together with the elders of the people, came to Felix to accuse Paul in this court. Felix heard the accusation delivered by a certain Tertullus, the orator, and then beckoned Paul to speak. In his speech, Paul speaks of his past life and bears witness of his faith. He proves that he is innocent of the charges brought against him and that he worships God according to the ancient hope of Israel. In our text, v. 16, he points to his life after his conversion as an evidence and result of that faith, proving both the correctness of his faith and the genuine Christian character of his work and life. This is now the subject before us. May God, then, bless us as we consider —

St. Paul's Defense Before Felix.

The apostle points out his life to be

1. The evidence of his faith; *2. The result of his faith.*

1.

St. Paul is the great exponent of the cardinal doctrine of the Christian Church that man is justified before God by faith. Rom. 3, 28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law." Eph. 2, 8. 9: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

Accordingly, the Lutheran Church teaches that we receive the forgiveness of our sins and are justified before God, not by works, but by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. Here is salvation without money and without price, appropriated by the sinner through faith.

But this faith which lays hold on Christ and His righteousness is not a dead thing. It has life, it moves and works. When a man repents of his sin and in true faith lays hold on Christ and His salvation, he cannot help but be active in good works. A faith that does not bring forth fruit is not faith at all. Jas. 2, 17: "So faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"; and v. 26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

True faith always evidences itself in good works. St. James says (chap. 2, 14): "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works?" Again v. 18: "I will show thee my faith by my works."

You see, then, that, although good works are not necessary to salvation in the sense that they must earn salvation, — for Christ alone could accomplish that, — yet works are the necessary evidence of true and genuine faith.

That is the religion that Paul preached. To prove his faith as genuine, he points to his works, to his life. He says in our text: "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men."

He does not say that he is blameless. He writes to the Philippians (chap. 3, 12. 13): "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," etc. And in our text he says: "I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense." That is his great care, that is his daily business, to put himself under daily discipline. As a soldier is disciplined and trained to march and fight in the army of his country, so St. Paul disciplines himself daily to fight the good fight of faith in a Christian life.

His aim in such daily exercise is to have a conscience void of offense. He earnestly seeks to lead such a life that his conscience will not upbraid him for anything he has done. The fear of God is in his heart, and therefore he fears to sin against his conscience. He courts the favor of his good conscience as you would court the favor of a dear friend. When you have a good friend, you will do nothing that would cause you to lose his friendship. Thus St. Paul means to say he strives to do nothing in his life that would make him lose his good conscience.

I wonder how Felix must have felt when he heard these words of the great Christian preacher. He certainly could not say that he exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. Felix was one of the most notorious men who ever ruled a province of Rome. Having been a slave in early life, he was emancipated by the favor of the empress and now elevated to the high station of governor. But he exercised his great power with the temper of a slave. He was a public tyrant. When Jonathan, the high priest, did not yield to his wish, he simply had him murdered.

In private life, Felix was as unscrupulous as in public. His present wife Drusilla was the legal wife of King Azizus of Emesa. "The charms of this fair Jewess fired the lust of the lewd Felix, and he simply hired the Cyprian sorcerer Simon to get her to leave her husband and live with this former slave, now governor of Judea. Felix and Drusilla were living in adultery at Caesarea at this time." How Felix, the lewd and licentious debauchee, must have felt to sit in judgment upon this great and pure man, whose faith brought forth such wonderful fruits in life!

How is it with you, my friend? Do you exercise yourself always to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man? Do you daily discipline yourself to walk in the ways of the Lord? Is that your daily care, is that your most important business, that you seek to learn more and more of the art of Christian living? If not, then your faith is not genuine; then your faith is merely a matter of the head and not of the heart.

Note also the *extent* of St. Paul's daily discipline. He seeks a conscience void of offense *toward God* and *toward men.* Both tables of the Law are to him a rule and guide. The first table says: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind"; the second table: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is Paul's daily concern to keep both of these great commandments of God.

Observe also that St. Paul says he exercises himself to have *always* a conscience void of offense. His religion is not the religion of one day of the week. It permeates his whole heart and life. As he preaches on Sunday, so he lives on Monday.

How is it with you, my friend? Do you go to church and hear God's Word and make confession with your mouth on Sunday, but on coming home you hang your religion with your Sunday clothes into the wardrobe? During the week you forget that you are a Christian? There you can drive a hard bargain and be the slave of the cares and riches and pleasures of this world? Ah, then your faith is as cold as a dead fish in your hand. It has no life, it brings forth no fruit. It is vain. You must have the evidence of your faith in your daily life. Your religion must go with you into your shop or office. Your religion must be with you behind the counter as well as in the pew. If your supposed faith does not transform your daily life, it is not faith at all.

But some may say, Have we not some examples in Scripture where men were saved by a faith that did not manifest itself in good works? Think of the malefactor to the right of Jesus when He was hanging on the cross. He came to faith in his dying hour. He had no opportunity to come down from the cross and prove his faith by bringing forth fruit in his life.

Ah, my friends, just go to Calvary and stand under the cross of that malefactor in his last moments of life and observe the wonderful fruits of his faith. Did he not correct the other malefactor who reviled Jesus? Did he not boldly confess Christ before men? Did he not publicly renounce sin and wickedness by the very confession of his guilt? All these things were wonderful fruits of his faith. And you may rest assured that, if that man had been permitted to come down from the cross, he would have followed Jesus even unto death. His faith was not merely a thing of the head, it had transformed his whole being.

How is it with you, my friends? Do you find good works in your life as the evidence of your faith? If I were to ask you: "Do you want justification by God's grace through faith? Do you wish to be saved without money and without price?" you would surely all raise a mighty chorus of yea, yea, yea! But if I were to add: "Do you also wish sanctification, *i. e.,* holiness of life? Are you willing to prove your faith by good works?" would not some be found in our midst who would be slow to answer? Ah, you wish to be saved freely by God's grace, but you do not exercise yourself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men at all times? Then, my friend, your faith cannot be genuine. It is merely a matter of your head and your mouth. It has not as yet filled you with a true love to God and man, which is the inevitable fruit of faith.

Jesus says: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." There may be hundreds of people whom you will never be able to induce to go to church and hear God's Word, but who will observe you in your daily life. They do not know God's Word, nor do they care about your confession of faith; what you *do,* counts with them. If they see that you exercise yourself always to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, that will make an impression upon them.

Pray God therefore that He may give you in your life this evidence of your faith, that you exercise yourself "always to have a conscience void of offense." For faith will produce good works.

On the other hand, we may say: Without faith no true works. For St. Paul shows that his Christian life is the *result* of his faith.

2.

You observe that St. Paul says in our text: "*Herein* do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." The word *herein* refers to the faith and hope toward God which St. Paul had spoken of in the previous verses, 14 and 15. St. Paul means to say: For that reason, since I firmly believe what is written in the Law and in the Prophets and have hope toward God and faith in the resurrection of the dead, I do exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

Here St. Paul brings out the fact that a Christian's faith in Christ and his belief in the resurrection of the dead and of eternal life is the motive and impelling force that moves him to walk in the ways of the Lord, that induces him to bring forth the fruits of a Christian life; just as the apostle taught in another instance: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

If you were to take the motor out of an automobile, you would have no driving force in your vehicle. If you were to get into such a car and turn on your ignition, and push the starter pedal, and shift your gear, and drop in your clutch, the car would nevertheless not run. Why? Because you have no motor. You have no power wherewith to drive the car. So it is in the life of a man who seeks to do good works without having faith in his heart. His works cannot please God because he has no faith.

A lady was being shown through a corn-mill, worked by a river which ran close by the wall. But all the wheels were in silent inaction. "Where is the power?" she asked. She was shown a handle and was told to press upon it. She did, and the mighty force was instantly turned on, the wheels were moved, and the place was alive with activity. So the power of God moves in upon us at the touch of faith, so that we can be active in good works.

So it was in St. Paul's life. For what was it that had changed his heart and made him espouse the cause of Christ, that made him the great apostle of the Gentile world, willing to brave all dangers and face death a hundred times that by all means he might save some? He answers: "herein," *viz.*, because he positively believes that Jesus, who had appeared to him on the way to Damascus, is the Christ, the Son of God, whose sacrifice on Calvary was sufficient for the sins of man, that our salvation is secure in Him since He rose again and lives and rules all things and will come again; because he firmly believes in Christ, as he declares: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"; and again: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." It was this faith that was the source of his inspiration and his undying love; this faith that caused him truly to love God and the souls of men.

My friend, have you that faith which lays hold on Christ, and the fruit of which is true love of God and man? You must have this faith if you are to do any good works in your life. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." But if you have this faith, then nothing can daunt your courage, nothing can dampen your ardor, nothing can quench your enthusiasm. Then good works will flow as naturally out of such a faith as heat radiates from the light.

After the battle of Lookout Mountain, when the Federal troops cleared the heights with a dash that was irresistible, General Grant sent to General Woods and asked, "Did you order the charge?" He said, "No." To Hooker and to Sheridan the same inquiry was put, and from them the same response was received. The fact was the men were filled with such enthusiasm that nothing could have stopped them. They leaped to the fray, defying danger and death, and, when the victory was gained, were filled with glad wonder at it. So it is with a Christian. When his heart is filled with faith, it will be active in love and good works.

Let us, then, pray the Lord, the Author and Finisher of our faith, to give us such a faith as this, a faith that exercises itself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. (Hymn 354.) J. A. LEIMER.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

What Is This Stewardship?

1 Pet. 4, 10.

We are beginning a series of sermons on Christian Stewardship. A timely theme.

Something is wrong in our church-life. There is much work to be done, but the laborers are few. Large sums of money are needed in the work of the Church, but our Church treasuries are deeply in debt.

Where is the fault? Who is to blame?

Some interested and careful observers of church-life tell us that we are remiss in our stewardship duties; that we must study and practise stewardship if conditions in our Church are to improve.

Are these critics right?

The question is worthy of serious and prayerful consideration, all the more so since the Bible contains numerous references to the subject of stewardship, one of these being the text before us. Let us begin the discussion of our general theme with the question, —

What Is This Stewardship?

1.

Naturally, *the meaning of the word* must first be brought out.

In general, a steward is one who is in the service of another, who has been entrusted with the care and management of certain goods and affairs which are not his own and which he is to administer under the direction and supervision of his superior.

It is to be noted that this definition places the steward in a subordinate position; he is not his own master. A servant.

It also puts upon the goods entrusted to him the stamp of a higher ownership and does not permit him to claim them as his own or to dispose of them as he pleases.

It finally demands of him that he regulate his life in accordance with the will of his superior, faithfully administer the affairs placed in his charge, and hold himself in readiness to give account of his responsibilities and activities at any time.

The state of being a steward is not necessarily menial or degrading. It may be, often is, a position of honor, high recognition, important responsibilities, conferring distinction upon the incumbent and conveying much satisfaction. Compare public officials and officers in corporate bodies of many kinds.

In a particular sense, stewardship is a term which defines man's relation to his God, teaching him to recognize himself as a servant whom God has entrusted with certain of His goods and the management of certain of His affairs.

This applies to us all, also to *you.*

Viewing yourself from this angle, you will realize that you are not your own lord, neither "the captain of your soul" nor "the master of your fate"; that the things you possess are really not your property, but are given into your charge only for a season by Him who owns all things; that you dare not attempt to do as you please with your life and possessions, but must be obedient to divine direction; and that at last you will have to surrender your post, return your talents, and give account of your stewardship.

In this sense, stewardship is, briefly, *sanctification,* the life of service and fruit-bearing which flows from saving faith and in which only a real Christian, a new creature in Christ, can be active.

2.

Now we shall have to *prove the fact* of our stewardship.

The *Bible* states and stresses this fact in various ways. Our text simply takes our position as stewards for granted. Elsewhere we are taught that we are not our own, Rom. 14, 7; 1 Cor. 6, 19. We belong to a lord in a much fuller sense than did the slaves of bygone days. High or humble, master or servant, rich or poor, we are all stewards, owned outright by the Lord. Stewards at birth; still stewards at death.

We therefore really own nothing of that which we have, Ps. 24, 1; Hag. 2, 8; 1 Chron. 29, 14; 1 Cor. 4, 7. Our powers and capacities, whether natural or acquired, are talents entrusted to us by Him who has made and bestowed them. Our material possessions, though seemingly the fruit of our industry and thrift, are undeserved blessings from on high given into our charge for a season. We cannot even call our souls our own.

Hence he who claims to be self-made and insists on the right to do as he pleases is not a good steward.

God's Law makes us all stewards, for it covers our entire lives and governs all that we think, say, and do. The commandments of God are really neither more nor less than stewardship regulations for mankind.

Also, to view the situation from still another angle, we are stewards by creation, Ps. 100, 3. (See Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.) And we are stewards by redemption, 1 Cor. 6, 20; 2 Cor. 5, 15; Eph. 2, 10. (See Luther's explanation of the Second Article.)

We shall be called to account at last, Rom. 14, 10.

Our own experiences confirm the Biblical statements. We have the Law, which makes us servants, written in our hearts. We never really feel sure in the possession of any of our goods. We are not even certain of keeping our lives from day to day. Our mental and bodily powers are often taken from us by circumstances over which we have no control. Forces against which we are helpless rob us of our material possessions. All around us there are evidences of God's absolute ownership and governing activity over all things.

All this applies even to the ungodly. Denial of the existence of God or repudiation of His lordship does not make one less a steward. Rather, the godless man's refusal to accept, and live up to, his stewardship obligations makes matters all the worse for him, here and hereafter. Do not envy him for his seeming independence, Ps. 73.

Accept the fact of your stewardship relation to God and govern yourself accordingly. That is true wisdom.

3.

Let us in conclusion dwell briefly on *the duties* of our stewardship. Cf. text.

In general, the duties of Christian stewardship are included in what has been said about the nature of stewardship. Every Christian should be acquainted with his obligations toward his God, his Church, and his neighbor and prepare to do accordingly.

In detail, *the proper state of mind* is important. We must fully agree in our hearts that we do not own, but owe; that we are the Lord's bond-servants by creation as well as by redemption; that, therefore, the Lord has first claim on all we are, have, and can do.

This must lead to the *conduct* expected of intelligent and trustworthy servants of the Lord. Let us study the will of God as to every phase of our Christian lives. Let us view in detail the talents of soul, mind, and body entrusted to us. Let us take an inventory of our money, time, and goods. Let us examine our surroundings to find opportunities for service.

There must always be time for soul-winning, for bringing back stray sheep, for visiting the sick, for supplying the wants of the needy, for church-work of various kinds.

The giving of money should not be haphazard, but a regular, systematic exercise. Do not give left-overs, but set aside for God a goodly portion of each dollar as soon as it comes to you and give as the Lord has prospered you.

Remember, too, that the duties of stewardship are incumbent on the young as well as on the old. God needs youth, and He wants age, in the work of His vineyard.

If you find these duties difficult, burdensome, tiring, remember that God never tires in His care for you; remember also that your Savior did not shrink from the greatest of all sacrifices — the giving of His life for your salvation. How pleasant it ough to be for us to be good stewards for Him who once was so faithful a steward for our sakes, etc.!

Let us be good stewards, not in order to win a reward, but in gratitude for the abundant mercies daily bestowed upon us by the God of our salvation.

(See illustrations at the close of this series of outlines.)

Karl Kretzschmar.

Faithfulness in Stewardship.

1 Cor. 4, 2.

This is the second in a series of three sermons on Christian Stewardship.

Stewardship is one of the terms which define our relation to God. It shows us to be servants of God, owned by Him and placed in temporary charge of certain functions and goods. It stamps all our talents and possessions with the mark of divine ownership. It governs our lives and regulates all we think, say, and do. It is the life of sanctification upon which a Christian enters when he becomes a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Every human being should know that he is a steward under God by creation, and every Christian should know that he is a steward of the Lord also by redemption.

Every steward must be taught to realize that his standing puts certain obligations upon him and that his value as a laborer in the Lord's vineyard, the well-being and progress of the Church, and his own happiness depend in a measure on his efficiency in the discharge of those obligations.

The prime factor of efficiency in Christian stewardship is the one referred to in to-day's text —

Faithfulness in Stewardship.

1.

We shall first *define the meaning of the term* "faithfulness."

In general, faithfulness is a character element; it attaches to a human being's inward make-up; it is a moral attitude, which manifests itself in connection with promises given, obligations assumed, activities undertaken, — in every detail of man's relation to God and his neighbor.

One who is faithful is trustworthy, reliable, devoted, unchanging in his interest and application; he keeps his promises, does his duty at all times, overcomes obstacles, is loyal in all things.

Faithfulness is a quality sought in persons holding certain positions, *e. g.,* in a friend, an official, a leader, soldier, servant, etc. It may be and is applied to certain activities, *e. g.,* preaching, teaching, governing, administering, fighting, guarding, laboring, etc.

It includes sincerity, honesty, application, diligence, thoroughness, self-forgetfulness, readiness to make sacrifices, etc. Joseph in Egypt, Moses (Num. 12, 7), Jesus, Paul, and others are outstanding examples of faithfulness.

Faithfulness is a high virtue in any walk of life.

If further details are desired, bring out the character and excellence of faithfulness by contrasting with unfaithfulness, deceit, cowardice, treachery, etc. Esau, Samson, Saul, Judas, Pilate, Demas, etc.

2.

Let us now *apply all this to Christian stewardship.*

Faithfulness in a Christian steward is first of all *the inward attitude* of one who knows himself to be a servant, trustee, under God, a bondsman created and redeemed to be his Lord's own; who gladly and fully accepts this state and relation, is in full inward accord with it; who considers all his talents of body and mind, his profession and station in life, his time and money, in fact, his entire existence, as affairs entrusted to him for a time by his divine Lord; who is happy and feels highly honored in so noble a calling, also is determined to live up to his duties as long as life may last, not in the hope of reward, but rather in appreciation of the many undeserved mercies of God.

The *conduct* of one who is faithful in his stewardship includes various factors and phases.

A Christian steward walks humbly in the sight of God and man (Micah 6, 8), as becometh one who holds a subordinate position. He gives God all credit and praise and confesses His name and salvation before men. Prideful bearing and self-praise do not agree with Christian stewardship.

A good steward of the Lord is a diligent worker in the kingdom of God, keeping first things first in his life. He always has time for church-work, using his talents for soul-winning and other congregational activities. If he is an officer, he conscientiously performs the duties of his position, realizing, too, the importance of setting a good example to others in the Church.

He divides his money so as to give the Lord's portion first and as the Lord has prospered him. If much has been given him, he realizes that much shall be required of him, etc.

He places his neighbor's interest alongside — if need be, even before — his own affairs, goes after the straying, visits the sick, helps the needy, drives his car on errands of charity and service, etc.

He puts the principles of stewardship into practise also in his secular relationships. He is a good citizen and obeys all laws for the Lord's sake. In his business dealings he is fair and honest. As an employer he is just as well as humane. As an employee he is diligent and conscientious. In his home he is sober, thrifty, considerate toward others, etc. Always and in all things serving God.

In these activities a faithful steward perseveres even when others tire and leave him to labor alone or when ingratitude seems to be his reward or when his own Old Adam protests, Gal. 6, 9; 1 Cor. 15, 58.

Also, he seeks not his own glory, but that of his divine Lord, Phil. 2, 11; 1 Pet. 4, 11.

Are we learning to realize how far short we come of true faithfulness in our stewardship?

3.

We shall add *a few considerations which are necessary to complete our discussion.*

Is not *too much being expected of us* in these teachings on Christian stewardship?

There are always some who fear that their time, strength, financial capacities, will be overtaxed. "I have no time," "I am not able," "I've done my part, get some one else," "the church is always asking for money," "don't bother me," — these and other objections and protests are heard. Let every Christian think twice before he complains of overtaxation. As a rule, much less is asked of us than we are really able to do and give.

Besides, faithfulness simply means doing diligently and honestly whatever can be done; no more than that is required. This is within the capacity of all and may therefore justly be expected of us. Do any of us ever say that God is doing too much for us?

True, a faithful Christian steward will not be able to follow the example of the children of this world, who go, come, do, and give as they please without regard for their obligations to God or man. But lest his life therefore seem cramped and limited to him, let him ask himself whether he would like to be judged at last with the children of this world.

This is a necessary lesson for those among us who find it difficult to recognize and do their duty as faithful stewards.

But what *if we should like to do better and cannot,* because of certain limitations beyond our control? Shall we refrain from doing little just because little is all we can do?

The text teaches that God expects no more than faithfulness, not quantity as much as quality. If little has been given us, let us be faithful in that. Compare the "widow's mite." Also see Luke 16, 10. Do not talk about what you would do with a dollar if you had it; show what you can do with the dime that you have. Faithfulness in little things is greater than carelessness in great things and is more richly blessed.

This is comforting to the steward who possesses but a scanty store; and it should keep those who have been given many talents from censuring such as cannot do or give much because not so richly endowed.

And whenever we become *conscious of our stewardship delinquencies,* let us in true penitence of heart turn to Him who came to fulfil all righteousness and who in our stead was obedient to death, even the death on the cross. He was the perfect Steward in order that through Him our sins against the law of stewardship might be atoned for. There is mercy and pardon with Him.

Finally, *for inspiration and stimulation* of our stewardship life let us turn to the cross of Jesus Christ. This is a great torch of life, vigor, and power at which we not only warm and revive our weak and ailing hearts, but may also light up our whole lives with the rays of love and service. Churchgoing, Bible-reading, and prayer bring us to this source of growth, strength, and fervor and therefore together constitute a potent tonic of the sanctified life. More and more do we then realize that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

Faithfulness in stewardship — noble ideal! Let us strive to attain it.

> Take my life and let it be
> Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
> Take myself, and I will be
> Ever, only, all for Thee.

(See illustrations at the close of this series of outlines.)

KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

The Joy of Stewardship.

Ps. 100, 2.

The third in a series of sermons on stewardship.

Do you know what stewardship is?

In Christian stewardship man is bonded to God by creation and by redemption; a trustee of all he is and has; accountable to God for his entire life.

What kind of steward are you?

As a steward man is required to be faithful; nothing less than that will do. Nor is more required of him, even though his talents be but few.

It is easier to talk about stewardship than to be a good steward. We need much encouragement to be and remain efficient in our stewardship.

The message to-day is designed to help you enjoy being a good steward of the Lord. Cf. text.

The Joy of Christian Stewardship.

1. *There should be joy in our stewardship.*
2. *There is joy in Christian stewardship.*

1.

"Serve the Lord with gladness." This shows there should be joy in our stewardship.

A) *What does that mean and imply?*

1) *Negatively* it means that the consciousness of our position as servants of God must not arouse within us a feeling of protest; we must not chafe against the burdens and demands of our stewardship; there must be no impatient murmurs when we are asked for gifts and

offerings; calls for service must not find us shirkers. Do these things occur among us?

2) *To state it positively,* there must be cheerful assent to, and willing acceptance of, the teachings and applications of stewardship; stewardship is to be considered a privilege rather than a mere liability; our position as workers with God should be highly appreciated as being an honor rather than an obligation; calls for service must be met with glad response, and our work in the Church should be done with a right good will; our giving should be looked upon as a right, a prerogative, and missionary as well as charitable appeals should be gratefully received, because thus opportunities for service, which otherwise we should have to go out and look for, are brought to our very doors and the performance of our duties is made easy for us.

Compare a tree in the evident glory of fruit-bearing; a bird in the joy of exurberant song; a light consuming itself in the joy of its radiance; a flower-bed happy in its riot of blossoms.

B) *Why should our serving and giving be gladly done?*

1) *God wants it.* Cf. text. See also Deut. 12, 18; Ps. 5, 11; 32, 11; Is. 51, 11; John 15, 11; Phil. 4, 4; 1 John 1, 4.

How can it be otherwise? For since God "looketh on the heart" and not merely on the outward appearance, it is essential that heart and will consent to all acts of stewardship, and that means gladness in serving.

2) *Only service with gladness will yield satisfaction.* Where there is inward protest against, or even only lack of interest in, the outward exercises of stewardship, be these ever so impressive, they remain mere empty forms, dead ceremonies. No one is happy in the performance of such acts. Is this perhaps one of the reasons why we are not so happy in our stewardship acts as we ought to be? Is not much of our serving and giving mere mechanical puttering, without heart and soul, and therefore unsatisfying?

3) *Also, we expect gladness in service from one another.* We do not enjoy service grudgingly given. Similarly our fellow-men whom we serve or with whom we cooperate in labors of Christian stewardship will enjoy what we do for or with them only when our services are given with gladness. Let us therefore mix gladness into our stewardship, and our lives will be acceptable to God, satisfying to ourselves, and enjoyable to our fellow-men.

C) *All this will lead to the realization that much of our life hitherto has been fruitless and futile* because we left gladness out of our stewardship. How much there is to be repented of! How great the need of God's mercy and of the cleansing blood of Jesus! Thanks be to God, who graciously supplies the lacks in our labors, saves us from the deserved consequences of our bungling, and brings much good out of our imperfect stewardship!

2.

Not only should there be joy in our stewardship, but true Christian stewardship actually causes gladness and is really enjoyable. Wherein does the joy of Christian stewardship consist? How shall we find and cultivate it?

A) *Let us once more emphasize that we are discussing only that kind of stewardship which deserves the appellation "Christian."* It is practised by such as are really believers in Christ. It consists in the acceptance of the doctrine that God is Lord and owner and that we are His servants, trustees of our endowments, talents, possessions. It operates through deeds and gifts of service and sacrifice for God, the Church, the neighbor. Its motives are faith, love, gratitude. Its model is Jesus Christ, the perfect Steward. Its objectives are the glorification of God, the extension of His kingdom, the winning of souls, the saving of human life.

B) *In such stewardship there is really joy.* See Gal. 5, 22.

Love, gratitude, appreciation, always uplift the heart and cause gladness. Acts of service, self-denial, sacrifice, prompted by these motives, become pleasurable and exhilarating experiences. How thoroughly do grateful children enjoy the service rendered to loving and beloved parents!

The more deeply we feel gratitude and love toward God and our Savior, the greater will be our gladness in serving. Compare the reactions of David expressed in Ps. 51. Compare also the experiences of the apostles. See 2 Cor. 6, 10; 7, 4; 12, 10; Jas. 1, 2; 1 Pet. 4, 13.

If there has been no joy in your stewardship, the reason may be lack of love and appreciation.

Also, there is the satisfaction of knowing oneself to be engaged in a great and glorious undertaking — the support and extension of God's kingdom; of being privileged to cooperate with a Lord whom to serve is an honor. Compare the position of an ambassador of the United States.

Then there is also the stimulating consciousness of knowing that as a Christian steward one is doing good things, bringing blessings, building a great structure, helping to heal the world's ills, saving mankind from destruction, etc. What joy there is in seeing the kingdom of God grow, noting the victories being won and the harvest of souls being gathered in, and knowing that one has a part in all this!

Best of all, there are the great and gracious rewards of faithful Christian stewardship promised by God Himself, 2 Cor. 9, 7; Prov. 3, 9. 10; 19, 17; Luke 6, 38; 18, 29. 30; Gal. 6, 8. 9; 1 Tim. 4, 8; Matt. 25, 37—40. In this connection we may also refer to the expressions and remembrances of gratitude and appreciation on the part of those who have enjoyed the benefits of our stewardship. These, too, attest the truth of the statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

C) *To cultivate such stewardship and find the joy that is in it,* let us often remind ourselves of our own unworthiness; let us daily view the cross on which the Good Steward of our salvation gave His life for us; let us realize how richly we have been blessed as children of God; let us often think of the glorious heritage awaiting us in heaven.

Then we shall not wait until we are called on for services or gifts, we shall volunteer; we shall always be about our Father's business and really give as the Lord has prospered us; we shall continue faithful even when sacrifices are required of us, when others become shirkers, and when no rewards are in sight.

Summing up, when all the pleasures and alleged joys of this life have been weighed in the balance, it will be found that the joy of Christian stewardship outweighs them all.

Stewardship Illustrations.

In a machine-shop the various moving mechanisms are connected with the main driving-shaft by transmission-belts. The belt which transmits the power of service into the mechanism of our stewardship is our faith, which is connected with the driving-shaft of God's creative goodness, redeeming love, and inspiring grace. If the belt breaks, the mechanism stops.

All nature is designed and organized on a plan of universal stewardship; for every creature is part of a great unit and exists for the support of every other creature, and all of them together are made to perform the will of their divine Creator.

Every human being is in his make-up an illustration of the laws and operations of stewardship. See Rom. 12, 4; 1 Cor. 12.

The flag-ship of the fleet of Christian service is stewardship.

Many people would be ashamed to offer as a tip to a Pullman porter the coin they unblushingly give to the Lord.

It was a favorite saying of Marcus Aurelius, the heathen philosopher, that "an unshared blessing cannot be enjoyed."

There is an old parable of the man who had a pond of water on his land and conceived the crazy notion of hoarding it. Daily he carried water into the pond, but he would take nothing out, keeping animals away from it and envying even the birds the drops they drank of it. Coming one day with an unusually heavy load of water, he slipped, fell into his pond, and was drowned. He who constantly takes in divine gifts and blessings, but refuses to give out anything in service does not enrich, but destroys, himself.

Contrast with this the well which gives out water that grows ever more abundant, sweet and refreshing the more of it is drawn.

What is the difference between a post and a tree? Both consist of the same material, both stand upright in the ground. But one is dead while the other lives. The man who wants an orchard plants trees, not posts. This illustrates the difference between good stewards and other church-members.

Adding sacrifice to service; diminishing personal needs and selfish desires; multiplying zeal and gifts; dividing time and talents, so that first things are always given first place, — that is the arithmetic of Christian stewardship.

Roger Babson said: "One dollar spent for a lunch lasts five hours; spent for a necktie, lasts five weeks; spent for a cap, lasts five months; spent for an automobile, lasts five years; spent on water-power or a railroad grade, lasts five generations; spent in the service of God, lasts for eternity."

Suggested for reading: *Our Christian Stewardship,* by John W. Duncan; *Stewardship for All of Life,* by Luther E. Lovejoy; *The Stewardship Life,* by the author of these outlines.

KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

FIVE MEN OF THE BIBLE.

Enoch.

Gen. 5, 24.

The Biblical character whose record is the source of our inspirational meditation during this hour is Enoch. Although Enoch lived to be 365 years old, the Bible, as far as words are concerned, has but a very scant record of him. The Bible speaks of him in four different places: in our text; in Luke's genealogy, Luke 3; Heb. 11; and Jude 14. 15. The Bible gives us the following facts: Enoch was the son of Jared (who died at the age of 962) and the father of Methuselah (who reached the age of 969 years); he was one of the human ancestors of the Savior; he lived a life of faith and therefore pleased God; he prophesied of the Judgment to come; he did not die, but God took him, translated him, out of this world into heavenly bliss. (He and Elijah were the only two men thus translated.) — Although this record is very brief, God must have had some divine purpose in embodying it in the Scripture. If we carefully study this brief record of Enoch, we shall find that it contains one of the most important and comforting truths of Scripture. It speaks to us of

The Blessed Immortality of Those who Walk with God,

teaching us —

1. *That only those who walk with God can expect to enjoy this blessed immortality;*
2. *That those who walk with God will surely enter upon this blessed immortality.*

1.

"Enoch walked with God." These few words describe the life of a man whom God finally, not by death, but by way of translation, took to Himself. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the commentary to these words. We read: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11, 5. 6a. Enoch in this life pleased God. "But," says the writer of Hebrews, "without *faith* it is impossible to please God." Therefore, walking with God means to *have* faith, and, as a result, to *live* the life of faith. Saying that a man walked with God was therefore simply a different way of saying that he was a child of God, or, as we would say in the New Testament language, a Christian. Such are the people that can expect to enjoy a blessed immortality. Therefore from our text we learn the following facts: —

a) Those who do not walk with God cannot expect a blessed immortality.

aa) Who are these? The Bible describes them: They walk after other gods, Deut. 8, 19; in the counsel of the ungodly, etc., Ps. 1, 1; in darkness, Ps. 82, 5; not in the ways of God, Is. 42, 24; but in the imagination of their evil hearts, Jer. 13, 17; after their flesh, Rom. 8, 1; as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, Eph. 4, 17; after their own ungodly lusts, Jude 18; as enemies of the Cross of Christ, Phil. 3, 18. These are the people who are yet in their natural sinful condition; who live without God in this world; who live unto their flesh, the world, and the devil; who love the world and the ways of sin; who are enemies of God, of His Word, of His Church, of His Christ, of their Savior. Some of these may be the refined people of this world, and some, like the Pharisees, may even be found in the visible Church.

bb) What must they expect? "Whose end is destruction," Phil. 3, 19. "Because My people hath forgotten Me, I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy," etc., Jer. 18, 15. 17. They are "like chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall no stand in the Judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish," Ps. 1, 4—6. "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16, 16. It was of the damnation of these that Enoch prophesied, Jude 14. 15. Examples: the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem, Judas, Dives.

b) We should not follow the example of such as walk not with God, but rather the example of Enoch, "who walked with God."

aa) Who are these? The Bible describes also these. They walk before the Lord, Gen. 24, 40; Ps. 89, 15; in God's statutes, Lev. 26, 3; in the good way, 1 Kings 8, 36; Hos. 14, 9; in God's truth, Ps. 86, 11; in newness of life, Rom. 6, 4; after the Spirit, Rom. 8, 1; Gal. 5, 25; worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, Col. 1, 10; in the light, as God is in the light, 1 John 1, 7; in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, Rom. 4, 12. These are such as have been born again by the Word of God, 1 Pet. 1, 23; Rom. 6, 4; who walked by faith, not by sight, 2 Cor. 5, 7; who in their life seek to please God and to do works of which they need not be ashamed, Rom. 6, 20—22. In other words, these are such as have come to a knowledge of their sins, repented of them, accept God's grace and forgiveness in Christ, and in their life bring forth the fruits of faith, Gal. 5, 22. 23. Thus Enoch walked with God.

bb) What may these expect? "The end, everlasting life," Rom. 6, 22. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. 1, 9. With God here, with God there. Those who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb are before the throne of God, serving Him day and night in His temple. They shall hunger no more, etc., Rev. 7, 15—17.

The hope of everlasting life is man's comfort amidst all the sorrows, troubles, heartaches, and trials of this life. But will such blessed expectation be realized? Enoch's translation is to give us the assurance.

2.

Of Enoch, the man who walked with God, our text says: "He was not, for God took him." This description of Enoch's future state is as brief as was the description of his life in this world. But it is also just as pregnant with a fulness of comforting truth. The Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the commentary also to these words. We read: "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him," Heb. 11, 5. Enoch did not die as other men die, and therefore his body was not buried; without letting him see death, God took him, translated him, unto everlasting bliss. In the case of Elijah's ascension we are told that there were witnesses, 2 Kings 2, 11. This we are not expressly told in Enoch's case, and yet we have good reason to believe that his translation was known, so that it served the purpose which God intended that it should. And certain it is that God had it recorded in the Old and in the New Testament for a very divine purpose. What is this purpose?

a) God would by Enoch's translation give evidence to those who live in their sins that there is a future state of existence and call them to repentance. We read thus in one of the apocryphal books: "Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated, being an example of repentance to all generations," Ecclesiasticus 44, 16. Although man's conscience tells him that death does not end all, yet many a one tries to silence his conscience, so that he can better continue to live in sin. Men love to say: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," 1 Cor. 15, 23. Enoch's translation is to remind them of the future state of existence and of the Judgment to come, Jude 14. 15. Man was created for eternity, and though his body is buried and returns to dust, it will be raised again, John 5, 28. 29.

b) At the same time, God would by Enoch's translation assure His children of their blessed immortality in the future state and encourage them in their hope of eternal life. From the old sinful flesh and blood which we Christians yet have doubts and misgivings arise; also Satan and the world trouble us. These say to us: After all, is there such a glorious heaven as you picture it to yourselves? Do you positively know that anybody has gone there? Yes, we do; Enoch went there, Elijah went there, and though it is the rule that all men must die, yet we have the Lord's word for it that we Christians who are alive and remain at the Lord's coming shall also be translated and transformed, 1 Thess. 4, 15—18. Yet we are told that all these shall not prevent them which are asleep; but "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him," 1 Thess. 4, 14. Has any one ever returned? Yes; Moses, whom the Lord Himself buried, and Elijah, who, like Enoch, had been translated, appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and were seen by Peter, James, and John. Even so did Lazarus come forth from the grave, the youth of Nain, and at Christ's death "graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection and went into the Holy City and appeared unto many," Matt. 27, 52. 53. And, above all, Jesus Himself rose again from the dead and was seen by many, even by five hundred at once, 1 Cor. 15, 6, and has given us the assurance that, as He lives, we who believe in Him shall also live, John 14, 19. The rule, however, is given Luke 16, 27—31.

With these facts we should comfort one another, 1 Thess. 4, 18, and say with Paul: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain," Phil. 1, 21.

Walking with God like Enoch, we shall like Enoch finally enter into eternal bliss, whether it be through the gates of death or by translation at the Lord's appearance unto Judgment. J. H. C. Fritz.

Ham.

Gen. 9, 20—25.

In our text we are told that Ham showed great disrespect to his old father Noah. Ham was punished for it. Why did God record this brief narrative in the Bible? Luther says: "Moses describes to us the terrible example of this man Ham in order that in the Church we should diligently teach our youth that they should honor old people, rulers, parents. Ham, who despised his father, is presented to us in this story in a rather disgusting picture, not for the sake of Noah or Ham, but for our sakes and those who follow after us." (St. L., I, 639.)

Ham a Warning to Children and Young People Not to Look with Disrespect upon Their Parents and Superiors

lest they fall under

1. Ham's guilt; *2. Ham's condemnation and punishment.*

1.

a) Noah gave occasion for Ham's guilt. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God," Gen. 6, 9. (For an explanation of the words "walked with God" see the outline on Enoch.) During the 120 years of grace prior to the Flood, 1 Pet. 3, 20, Noah was "a preacher of righteousness," 2 Pet. 2, 5. The Scripture gives testimony that Noah believed in God and that he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," Heb. 11, 7. The saints, however, were not perfect men, Jas. 5, 17. (Examples: Moses, David, Peter, and others.) — Noah planted a vineyard; he made wine. There was nothing wrong in doing that. Scripture does not condemn the use of wine, John 2, 1—11; 1 Tim. 5, 23; only its abuse, Eph. 5, 18; 1 Tim. 3, 3; 1 Pet. 4, 3; 1 Cor. 6, 10. *Abusus non tollit usum.* (Of course, the prohibition laws of the state must be obeyed.) Noah became intoxicated and in a drunken state was found lying naked in his tent, v. 21. Drunkenness leads to other sins, such of which it is a shame even to speak. A drunken person degrades himself even below the level of a beast. — The sins of the saints are recorded for our warning and comfort: for our warning, that he that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; for our comfort, not that we should make light of sin or follow the evil example, but that we should know that even the life of a saint is not yet perfect on this earth and that, when we fall, we should repent, as David and others did, and be assured of God's grace.

b) Noah's sin was no excuse for Ham's sin. Those who give occasion to others to sin are, of course, guilty in a twofold way; yet that does not excuse the person who yields to the temptation. What was Ham's sin? See v. 22. Ham's sin did not consist in his seeing his father in a shameful state of intoxication, — that, perhaps, was accidental and unavoidable on his part, — but that he *delighted* in so seeing his old father (Noah was over six hundred years old), the old patriarch and preacher of righteousness, and even found delight in *telling* the bad and sad news to his brothers. The brothers took an altogether different attitude, v. 23. Even now they respected their father. They remembered that, after all, the drunken father was still their father. Had Ham not delighted in thinking impure thoughts, he likely would not have shown that disrespect to his father. (All three, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were with Noah in the ark, had the same training and bringing up. By these three families the world was peopled after the Flood. The descendants of Ham, the Canaanites, became idolaters. So even to-day in the best families we at times find that one child goes wrong.)

The Lord says: "Honor thy father and thy mother." The Lord does not say: Honor the father and mother who do not sin, who always set a good example by their Christian life, who are always in good health, who have a perfect physique, and who are educated, observe good manners, etc., but the Lord simply says to children: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Christian children should not despise their parents when they are old or if they are queer, ill, poor, deformed, etc.; nor should they show disrespect even to a sinful parent, but bear in mind that a parent is a parent nevertheless, Prov. 23, 22; Lev. 19, 32; Gen. 46, 29; 47, 7. 11; 1 Kings 2, 19; Luke 2, 51; John 19, 26. 27.

"Honor thy father and thy mother," this commandment must be taught and enforced with special emphasis in our day, when so much disrespect is shown to parents (masters, superiors, government) and when there is so much disregard of law and order. Nothing good can come of disobeying God's laws. This we learn when we, secondly, consider Ham's condemnation and punishment.

2.

a) The curse pronounced: "Cursed be Canaan!" The question arises, Why did Noah not say, Cursed be Ham? Canaan was the son of Ham. Perhaps, as some think, Canaan was a party to his father's sin. The text, however, does not say so. It is nevertheless remarkable that, when Ham's sin is spoken of, we at once read the words: "Ham, the father of *Canaan,* saw," etc., v. 22. Moses was writing to and for the children of Israel. These were acquainted with the Canaanites, the descendants of Canaan and Ham, for they dwelt in their land. The Canaanites appeared to them as an idolatrous and cursed people. Moses, no doubt, wished to impress upon them the fact that the curse had come upon the Canaanites because of the sin of their progenitor, *in whose footsteps they followed.* Therefore Ham's curse was Canaan's curse: "Cursed be Canaan!" God's curse rests upon all sin, Deut. 27, 26; especially also upon the sin of disrespect and disobedience to parents, Prov. 30, 17.

b) The curse: "A servant of servants shall Canaan be unto his brethren." Solomon made the Canaanites perform forced labor, 1 Kings 9, 20. 21 (the tribes here mentioned were descendants of Canaan). The Canaanites were idolaters. On account of their sins the Canaanites were condemned to destruction, Deut. 20, 17. Ham's sin of disrespect shown his father should not go unpunished. He exerted an evil influence upon his descendants. Following his footsteps, they had to share his punishment. While God has given a gracious promise to obedient children ("that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth"), He pronounced His curse upon disobedient children, Prov. 30, 17; 1 Sam. 2, 12; 4, 17. In the final analysis the curse pronounced upon sin is death, eternal damnation, Rom. 6, 23.

This lesson of our text needs to be learned in our day. Surely punishment will come upon our nation (has it not to an extent already come upon us?) because of the disrespect and disobedience shown to parents, masters, government, because of the setting aside of law and order. Says Luther: "Here, then, you have the fruit and the reward, that whoever observes this commandment shall have happy days, fortune, and prosperity; and on the other hand, the punishment, that whoever is disobedient shall the sooner perish and never enjoy life. For to have long life in the sense of the Scriptures is not only to become old, but to have everything which belongs to long life, such as health, wife, and children, livelihood, peace, good government, etc., without which this life can neither be enjoyed in cheerfulness nor long endure. If, therefore, you will not obey father and mother and submit to their discipline, then obey the hangman; if you will not obey him, then submit to the skeleton-man, *i. e.,* death [death the all-subduer, the teacher of wicked children]. For on this God insists peremptorily: Either if you obey Him, rendering love and service, He will reward you abundantly with all good, or if you offend Him, He will send upon you both death and the hangman." (Large Catechism; *Triglot,* p. 619.)

An appeal should be made to parents to bring up their children according to God's will. "Here consider now what deadly injury you are doing if you be negligent and fail on your part to bring up your child to usefulness and piety and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you be otherwise pious and holy. And because this is disregarded, God so fearfully punishes the world that there is no discipline, government, or peace, of which we all complain, but do not see that it is our fault; for as we train them, we have spoiled and disobedient children and subjects." (Large Catechism; *Triglot,* p. 631.)

In order that God may not let His curse come upon us for our sins, especially also the sins against the Fourth Commandment, let us repent and by faith turn to God's grace in Christ and pray God that He may not only keep from us His just punishment, but grant us grace and strength to walk in the ways of His commandments, that we honor His name and be profited thereby, knowing that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. 4, 8. J. H. C. Fritz.

Ishmael.

Gen. 21, 9—20.

In a forest there are found many different trees, some towering above all others, conspicuous by their size, serving as landmarks, while others are not so noticeable, are easily overlooked. Yet all trees, large or small, are the handiwork of the power and wisdom of God, each one declaring the glory of Him who made all things.

The Bible presents to us a forest of God-fearing men, each one differing from all others in character, culture, etc. We see men standing head and shoulders above all others, Adam, Noah, Abraham, men whom every one recognizes at once as great men, outstanding examples for all generations to come. There are hundreds of other men mentioned in the Bible of whom less is said, who remain comparatively unknown. Yet what Scripture tells of them will convince us that they, not less than the better-known men, are miracles of divine grace and mercy, that they also show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Such a man is

Ishmael.

1. *The highly favored child of God becoming a castaway.*
2. *The lost and erring sheep restored to the fold.*

1.

Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, Gen. 16, 1—4. 15. 16, was highly favored of God. Up to the birth of Isaac, Ishmael enjoyed privileges and blessings greater than any other child in his time and age. He was the son of Abraham, the man of God, and brought up by him in the fear of God. To Abraham, God had revealed Himself, Gen. 12, 1. 7. With this man, God had familiar intercourse, Gen. 18, 1 ff. 17 ff. To Abraham had been given the promise of the Messiah, Gen. 12, 2. 3; 13, 16; 18, 18. Abraham, greatly blessed, proved a blessing especially to his own household, commanding his children and his household after him that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, Gen. 18, 19. In such a home, under the guidance of such a parent, Ishmael grew up into boyhood. How great a privilege! — Moreover, at the age of thirteen, when he was old enough to understand the meaning of this rite, Ishmael was circumcised, Gen. 17, 25. Circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had; cf. Rom. 4, 11. Thereby Ishmael also was received into that covenant which God had made with Abraham for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto him and to his seed after him, Gen. 17, 7. In a signal manner God had shown His grace and mercy to Ishmael.

Like grace is granted to every child reared in a Christian home. How thankful every child of Christian parents ought to be for this unmerited blessing! How grateful to God for being privileged like Timothy to know the Scriptures from a child, to have pious parents and grandparents, to grow up in the atmosphere of a truly Christian home! To be accepted into God's covenant as an infant through Holy Baptism, to be taught to fold the hands in prayer at mother's knee, to be brought up by father in the fear and nurture of the Lord, that is a precious privilege indeed. How many children, how many grown people appreciate this grace of their God?

Ishmael, spite of God's grace and loving-kindness, spite of his training under Abraham's care, became a mocker. How was that possible? We are not told. Envy, perhaps, and jealousy filled his heart when Isaac, the true heir of the house, was born. Instead of fighting against, and overcoming, this evil disposition, he suffered sin to master him. He began to mock the heir of the house. He continued, until he mocked not only occasionally, but until that mockery became a habit, a characteristic trait, until the formerly pious boy had become a mocker, Gen. 21, 9. "Circumstances show that this dispute did not last one day, but several years. This is proved by St. Paul, Gal. 4, 29, where he calls this the time of persecution." (Luther, II, 1387.) This mocking not only provoked the wrath of Sarah, v. 10; God Himself commanded Abraham to cast Ishmael out of the company of God's people. No longer was Ishmael to be regarded as included in the gracious covenant which God had made with Abraham. He had become a castaway through his own fault.

How often has this sad story been repeated! How many of those who had begun in the Spirit have surrendered to the flesh! Not always was it the sin of mocking. Any one of the works of the flesh named Gal. 5, 19 f., obtained the mastery over them: Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33; many of the disciples (former adherents) of Jesus, John 6, 66; Judas; Demas. Many a child, heart and soul cleansed by the Spirit of God, grew up a pious, obedient, sweet, lovable boy or girl, and ten, twenty years later, it laughed at the faith of its childhood, mocked at everything that once was held sacred, no longer served God and Christ, but became a slave to its own lust and passions. No longer a child of God, but put out of the Christian congregation as a heathen man and a publican, Matt. 18, 17; 1 Cor. 5, 13. We shudder at the change. Yet: 1 Cor. 10, 12. Are you an Ishmael? Rom. 2, 2—9.

2.

Ishmael, the child of God, an outcast! Yet behold the unfathomable grace and mercy of God: the Good Shepherd goes after that which is lost until He finds it, Luke 15, 4.

Ishmael and his mother left the home of Abraham, apparently without showing signs of sorrow and repentance. The dismissal may have shocked them, but they remained impenitent. They went into the wilderness, bound, perhaps, for Egypt, the native country of Hagar, Gen. 21, 9, whither once before she had endeavored to escape, Gen. 16, 7. For some reason they strayed from the way; they were lost, lost in the wilderness. The water supply became scanty; soon the last drop was drained from the bottle by the parched lips of Ishmael. Supported by his mother, whose love to her only son alone upheld her, finally carried in her strong arms, he collapsed, and his mother dragged him into the scant shade of a desert shrub, where he was at least protected from the fiercely burning rays of the sun. There he lay, groaning, gasping, dying that death which of all deaths is the most horrible — slowly thirsting to death.

Behold, now he prays! Now no more mockery comes over his lips. Now all those precious truths, all those prayers learned in the home of Abraham come back to him, above all, the knowledge of the true God, who so loved the world that He had promised to send His Messiah to be a blessing to all nations. Surely this God would have pity and compassion on him who was dying in the wilderness. "Being so close to death, Ishmael surely did not boast of the fact that he was the offspring of Abraham. When trouble and fear of death lies upon him, he forgets these things. . . . There was nothing left for him but the unutterable sighing of a desponding heart, so that he confesses to be unworthy of his father's home and inheritance." (Luther, II, 1435.)

This prayer God heard, v. 17. "In this music, which may seem to us sad and sorrowful, God delights more than in any other act of worship, as He says Is. 66, 2." (Luther, II, 1436.) Behold the Shepherd seeking and finding His lost sheep! Marvelous grace! He leads him to repentance, shows the life-saving water, and: v. 20. "After the carnal trust has been killed in Ishmael, he is made a true child of promise. What he had demanded as a lawful right and not obtained, that is granted to him in the utmost need by grace." (Luther, II, 1437.) Ishmael grew up, God being with him. Obedient to his mother, v. 21, reconciled to his brother, 25, 9, he died in the true faith, an heir of eternal life, 25, 17. "Gathered unto his people" is a phrase used only of the death of believers, Gen. 25, 8; 35, 29; 49, 29; Num. 20, 24. 26; Deut. 27, 13; 31, 2; 32, 50. Truly, we marvel at the unfathomable depths of God's grace.

If you have followed Ishmael in mocking, follow him in repentance. However, why follow Ishmael in his transgression? You are now enjoying the privileges that go with the adoption of sons. Why not be thankful now? Why not show your gratitude now by serving this loving God in holiness and righteousness? Why not let His *goodness* lead you to true repentance? Why wait until He is obliged to chastize severely, until he deprives you of the blessings which you now enjoy? Above all, why tempt God? He has not promised that He will call you three, five, ten times. No! Ps. 95, 7. 8; 2 Cor. 6, 2. Therefore: Heb. 2, 1. (Hymn 47, 4. 5.) TH. LAETSCH.

Jacob.

Gen. 32, 10 a.

NOTE. — The life of Jacob as described in the Bible contains much sermon material, too much for one sermon. If preferred, the following outline could be so used that each one of the parts would form the basis of one sermon in a series of three sermons on the life of Jacob. The sermonizer should first carefully read Gen. 25—37 and 46—50. Only the outstanding facts can be used in one sermon. This is done in the following outline. The text to be read covers these features.

No cross, no crown. Every Christian experiences the truth of this saying; — some in a larger, some in a smaller measure. Some of God's dearest children have a large amount of trials to endure. Like Asaph, Ps. 73, they are plagued, chastened. When they see how some of the wicked and ungodly lead a care-free life, they almost lose their faith. But we read: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousnss unto them which are exercised thereby," Heb. 12, 6. 11. — Jacob's life was a life of many sorrows and trials, yet in it all we behold the gracious love of God. It is a great comfort to us Christians to study Jacob's life and learn that God is indeed merciful to us poor sinners. In spite of our utter unworthiness He bestows upon us His gracious love.

The Mercies of God as Seen in the Life of Jacob.

1. *The mercy of God as seen in God's choice of Jacob.*
2. *The mercy of God as seen in the special manifestations of God's gracious love.*
3. *The mercy of God as seen in the turning of Jacob's sorrows into blessings.*

1.

a) It was in answer to prayer that Jacob's mother (Rebekah), who had been barren, gave birth to him and his brother Esau, Gen. 25, 21.

b) It was without any merit on Jacob's part that God chose him to become one of His children, promised him special blessings ("the elder shall serve the younger," Gen. 25, 23), and made him one of the human ancestors of the Savior, Gen. 28, 14. According to Paul, God's choosing of Jacob was an act of divine grace; it shows that our calling to be God's children is not of works, not because of any merit on our part, but of the grace of Him that calleth, Rom. 9, 10—15. Truly Jacob could say: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant."

Even so our calling to be children of God is by grace. That is a source of comfort to us, Rom. 8, 29—39. "Moreover, this doctrine gives no one a cause either for despondency or for a shameless, dissolute life, namely, when men are taught that they must seek eternal election in Christ and His holy Gospel, as in the Book of Life, which excludes no penitent sinner, but beckons and calls all the poor, heavy-laden, and troubled sinners [who are disturbed by the sense of God's wrath] to repentance and the knowledge of their sins and to faith in Christ and promises the Holy Ghost for purification and renewal and thus gives the most enduring consolation to all troubled, afflicted men that they know that their salvation is not placed in their own hands, — for otherwise they would lose it much more easily than was the case with Adam and Eve in Paradise, yea, every hour and moment, — but in the gracious election of God, which He has revealed to us in Christ, out of whose hand no man shall pluck us, John 10, 28; 2 Tim. 2, 19." (Formula of Concord, Art. XI, p. 1093. *Triglot.*) We are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, Eph. 2, 8. 9.

2.

Three special instances of special manifestations of God's gracious love: —

a) The blessing which God intended Jacob to have was pronounced upon him, Gen. 27, 28. 29. This blessing promised not only material needs, but spiritual blessings, especially the blessing of the Messiah. Said the Lord: "Cursed be every one that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Whether one be cursed or blessed depends upon one's attitude toward the Savior.

How shall we explain the deception by means of which Jacob received his blessing, Gen. 27, 1—7? Some modern commentators simply declare that Rebekah and Jacob were intentional deceivers. Luther and the old Lutheran commentators say that Rebekah, knowing that the Lord had promised the blessing to Jacob and not to Esau, acted with good intentions. Stoeckhardt agrees with Luther, but says that the whole matter was an unusual procedure under unusual, extraordinary circumstances and an example which ordinarily may not be followed. He also calls attention to the fact that certain works of God's saints in themselves appear to be sinful, while the motive back of them is good. (*Die bibl. Gesch. d. A. T.*, p. 37.)

However, we need not excuse Rebekah and Jacob, nor Isaac, who also knew that the blessing was not intended for Esau, but for Jacob. We must keep in mind that the saints, as long as they were on this earth, were not perfect. James expressly says that "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are," Jas. 5, 17. After all, God, in order to carry out His eternal counsels, did not need such assistance as Rebekah and Jacob gave Him. It is a comfort for us to know that God in His mercy forgives our sins and in spite of our unworthiness grants us His blessings.

b) When Jacob had to flee to escape the wrath of his brother Esau, God appeared to him in a dream and renewed the assurance of divine blessings, especially the Messianic blessing: "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. 28, 10—15. The promise of the Savior was the real source and comfort of all of God's blessings, also those blessings needed for this life.

We have no special promise that God will appear to us in dreams, but we Christians also experience special manifestations of God's wonderful guidance and protection, which prove to us that our God is with us. Luther, for instance, was taken to the Wartburg to escape the wrath of his enemies. Many examples can be cited. Especially does God through His Word ever anew assure us of His gracious love and mercy, even as God gave this assurance to Jacob when in a dream He reminded him of that promise which He had *already previously* given to Jacob, thus assuring him of divine blessings.

c) Jacob wrestles with God at Peniel, Gen. 32, 24—33; Hos. 12, 5. In this physical, but especially in the spiritual combat, Jacob by faith prevailed. He said: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Therefore God said to him: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed."

God at times seems to have forsaken His believers. Fear and the feeling of damnation takes hold of them; they almost despair of God's grace. Those are hard trials for the children of God. At such times they, like Jacob, wrestle with God by faith and say: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me," Gen. 32, 26b. And God will bless them and strengthen their faith and, as He did unto Jacob, let them prevail. And that, after all, was God's good and gracious purpose. Says God: —

Thou before My eyes art ever,
  In My bosom thou art laid
As a nursing child, and never
  Shalt Thou lack My timely aid.
Me and thee no time nor stress,
War, nor danger, nor distress,
No, nor Satan's self shall sever, —
Only be thou faithful ever.

Surely, again we see that Jacob could say: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant."

3.

Yes, God turns our sorrows into real blessings. The life of Jacob furnishes such examples. Especially two shall be mentioned: —

a) Jacob at Laban's home. Gen. 29, 1—30 describes Jacob's courtship and love and service for Rachel. Laban, however, deceived Jacob. Instead of Rachel he gave him Leah. Thereafter Jacob faithfully served Laban, but Laben again deceived him, Gen. 30, 25—26.

b) Jacob was made to believe that a wild beast had devoured Joseph, his second youngest son, much beloved by him and much hated by his brothers, Gen. 37, 31—35.

Jacob's sorrows, however, in the end were turned into blessings. This cannot only be seen throughout the life of Jacob, for instance, in the reconciliation between himself and Esau, in his material prosperity, etc., but also especially is it learned from the record of his last days: Jacob found Joseph alive in Egypt, a man upon whom great honors had been bestowed; and Jacob himself was permitted to spend his last days in Egypt, enjoying Joseph's care. Also the entire subsequent history of Israel proves how the sorrows of Jacob were turned into real blessings for many, Gen. 46—50.

God does not forsake His children in their troubles and trials, but turns these into blessings, Gen. 50, 20; Heb. 12, 11. "Be not afraid, only believe," Mark 5, 36. J. H. C. Fritz.

Joshua.

Josh. 1, 6—9.

Moses, the servant of God and for forty years the ruler and leader of Israel, had died. But God's work was not to end with Moses' death. Moses had asked God to appoint another leader over Israel, Num. 27, 15, and God Himself had selected Joshua for this office. Our text relates the installation of Joshua as leader of Israel and brings out the qualifications for leadership in the Church of God until the end of times.

Joshua an Example of Leadership in the Church of God.

1. *By his undaunted courage;*
2. *By his loyalty to the Word of God.*

1.

No less than three times God admonishes Joshua to be strong and of good courage, vv. 6. 7. 9. Courage is needed for leadership, and courage indeed was the outstanding characteristic of Joshua. The first time we meet Joshua, Ex. 17, 9, we see him at the head of the army, courageously battling against Amalek. Joshua was one of the twelve spies, who were selected chiefly because of their courage, Num.

13, 20. While ten of these spies lost courage, Joshua was one of the two who faced that excited multitude and exhorted it to take courage and fight the battles of the Lord, Num. 14, 6—10. — It surely required courage to undertake the conquest of Canaan. The dangers as described by the spies were not altogether exaggerated, Num. 13, 31 ff.; cf. 14, 45. Three times the Lord Himself told Israel that nations stronger than they occupied Canaan, Deut. 4, 38; 7, 1; 9, 1. Yet Joshua was just that man of courage needed for leadership in this undertaking. Undismayed by obstacles, undaunted by numbers, he undertook the conquest and devoted himself whole-heartedly to this task. Examples of his courage: the swift night march to the rescue of Gideon, 10, 9; his prayer, nay, his command that the sun stand still, 10, 12—14; his surprise attack against the Northern kings, 11, 7; his long-continued warfare, 11, 18, until finally the land was taken, 11, 23.

God has given to the Church of the New Testament a task fully as difficult as that committed to Joshua — the conquest of souls for Christ. Within and without the Church the kingdom of God is to be built and extended. Within and without the enemies of this kingdom are to be routed, giants, truly, strong, powerful foes, Eph. 6, 12. — Mission-work, the proper education of the children and young people, brotherly admonition, never-ceasing warfare against ever-threatening worldliness, these are but a few items of the huge task imposed by God upon His Church. This task calls for men of supreme courage, men that will not fear to confess the faith that dwells within their hearts, men undaunted by difficulties arising, undismayed by obstacles suddenly looming up, undeterred by the many sacrifices of time and money and convenience demanded, men unaffected by the enmity and hatred of the world, unshaken by the frequent ridicule, petty jealousies, expressions of dissatisfaction, and murmurings within the ranks of church-members; men who, far from joining with the disgruntled shirkers, rather by their noble example of courage put like courage and devotion into the hearts and minds of their fellow-Christians; true leaders in the best sense of the word. Would to God that we had many members of this kind in our churches and congregations, yea, that this spirit would dwell in every Christian, young and old! Num. 11, 29; 2 Tim. 2, 1; 1, 7; Phil. 1, 28; 4, 13.

Joshua's courage was founded on the promise of God, vv. 5. 6. We have a similar promise, Matt. 28, 20. The Lord has promised that through our preaching of the Gospel the nations should be discipled, the kingdoms of this world be made the kingdom of the Lord. Let this promise of the presence of the Lord and the success with which our work will be blessed fill us with ever new courage.

Joshua's courage was not a gift of nature, but of grace. There were times when even Joshua's courage failed him, when he wished that they had been content to remain on the other side of Jordan, Josh. 7, 6—9. Yet in that hour of weakness, of sudden despair, he applied for help and renewed courage at the only source of strength, the Lord God, who did not reject him, but again filled his heart with undismayed courage. Thus did David, 1 Sam. 30, 6. If our courage fails us, if dangers seem too great, let us not forget to ask God for true courage and undismayed willingness to continue in His service. Rest assured that our prayer will be heard. He will help us to become true leaders in the Church of God.

2.

Vv. 7. 8. Joshua is exhorted to remain loyal to the Word of God; and to his honor be it said that next to his courage loyalty was the outstanding characteristic of this great leader of Israel. In accordance with God's command he observed to do according to all the Law of Moses and turned neither to the right hand nor to the left. His loyalty was frequently put to a severe test. What could seem more foolish than the command of God to take the strong and well-fortified city of Jericho by merely marching around the city walls? What ridicule must have been poured out on Joshua by the inhabitants of the city! Yet God had commanded this very thing, and Joshua, in loyalty to God's word, obeyed, and, lo, he met with success. What could seem more foolish than the command of God to overcome the world and to build up His kingdom by the mere preaching of the Gospel without recourse to human strength or wisdom? Yet God has commanded just this, and true leadership in the Christian Church consists in unquestioning loyalty to this command of God, may it seem ever so foolish to human reason. True leadership does not consist in the hatching and enforcing of schemes for social reform and moral uplift, in the teaching of Western civilization and American culture, in the forcing of "Christian" principles upon an unwilling populace by means of legislation. It does not consist in substituting man-made devices and plans and methods for the Word and will of God. True leadership consists in loyalty to the old, old Gospel of Christ and Him crucified as the only means of building and extending the Church of God on earth.

Joshua showed his loyalty to God's will when God demanded that the accursed thing be put out of Israel, Josh. 7. Without fear or favor, without respect of persons, he had Achan put to death according to the Word of God and thus removed the offense out of Israel. — In like manner true leadership in the Church of God demands undaunted execution of the will of God as expressed in Matt. 18, 15 ff.; 5, 19; 1 Cor. 5 (church discipline).

Note again Joshua's loyalty in refusing to enter into alliances with the Canaanites, in strict accord with God's command, Deut. 7.

Though this command may have seemed a harsh one to human reason, yet in loyalty to God's word he obeyed. This loyalty to God's will was the reason why Israel remained faithful to God as long as Joshua lived, Josh. 24, 31. Disloyalty to this command was the cause of Israel's downfall, Judg. 1; 2, 11—23. — Leaders in the Christian Church dare never forget Rom. 16, 17; Tit. 3, 10. Unionism is a deadly poison, not building the Church, but destroying it; not gathering with Christ, but scattering; not loyalty, but treason. Leaders, beware of unionism!

Joshua did not reach perfection in his loyalty; cf. the incident with the Gibeonites, chap. 9, 14. He was in need of forgiveness, and having obtained forgiveness, he profited by his error. He became the more careful. Let all leaders follow his example. Come to Jesus with sincere confession of your own failings and with the firm resolution and pledge of greater loyalty to God and His Word. Is. 54, 17; Matt. 16, 18; Luke 21, 15.

THEO. LAETSCH.

FIVE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE.

Eve.

Gen. 3, 1—7.

"But all things of God," we read 1 Cor. 11, 12. The Christian believes with Paul: "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him," 1 Cor. 8, 6. Turning to the first page of the Bible, we find the same truth: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." It is the refrain of the whole Bible. Evolution, human philosophy, *surmises* a prehistoric man. The Christian *knows* by divine revelation that God made man and woman, created them in His own image. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Without God's revelation there is no way by which man may find out the origin of all things, the origin of himself. And how unspeakably we are indebted to God for giving us a revelation of His will and His works! In the first chapters of the Bible we have the most extensive, the most profound, and the most sublime truths that can possibly come within the reach of the human intellect. There in sober, sane language we have an account of our origin, in total contrast with the vain speculations and imaginings of human wisdom, the grotesque and fantastic conceptions of the beginning of life, as given us by human reason. Do we appreciate the grandeur of our confession when we say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

Closely connected with this record of God's creation is the narrative of her of whom we shall speak this evening — Eve. In the study of her life, as much as is given us in the Bible, we come upon some of the fundamental, elemental things of our existence.

Eve the Mother of All Living.

The last and the greatest act of God's creation was when He created man. To him God gave dominion over all that He had created. When all creatures were led before him to give them a name, man made a discovery — that he was alone. None of these creatures was like him, with none could he speak, with none could he hold communion. Therefore God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him." And God caused a deep sleep to fall upon man, and while he slept, God "took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which God had taken from man made He a woman and brought her to man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man," Gen. 2, 21—23.

1.

The creation of woman teaches us the true relation of the sexes to one another. Why did God create woman in this manner? We are not told. You may ask the same question about man's creation. She was not "made out of the dust of the earth." God could have created woman by a mere word, or He could have created her at the same time as He created man. But He did not. He created man first and gave him dominion over the world, and when He was about to create woman, He said, "I will make him an help meet for him." Paul writes 1 Cor. 11, 7 that man is the head, which can hardly be stressed too much these days. And there is significance in the creation of woman out of what God took from man's side. She was not taken from the head of man, lest she should rule over him, nor from his feet, lest he should trample upon her, but she was taken from his side, that she might be his equal; from under his arm, that he might protect her; from near his heart, that he might cherish and love her. 1 Pet. 3, 7; Col. 3, 19. Woman is in some respects the equal of man before God; like man she was given a soul; like man she was endued with the image of God. "She shall be called Woman," as her complement was called Man. And she differs from him only as to sex and its concomitants.

"God could have formed woman out of the dust of the earth, as He had formed the man; but had He done so, she must have appeared to his eyes as a distinct being, to whom he had no natural relation. But as God formed her out of a part of man himself, he saw that she was of the same nature, the same identical flesh and blood, and of the same constitution. . . . This at once insured his affection and excited his esteem." (*Adam Clarke.*)

A woman once had the question put to her by a man which of the two sexes is superior to the other, male or female. Her answer in brief was as follows: "Which is best, sunshine or rain? Your question is foolish and cannot be answered because neither sex is wholly superior to the other. One excels in one thing, the other in another thing, and it is idle to contrast them without defining just what qualities you mean. If you mean physical strength, undoubtedly the male is superior. . . . Yet many a frail little mother outlives all her stalwart sons. When it comes to courage, the male sex is superior. . . . Yet any doctor will bear testimony that women have ten times the nerve about bearing pain that men have. When it comes to intellect, the male sex is superior. . . . No woman has written a supremely great book, or painted a supremely great painting, or built a supremely great edifice, or made a great invention, or become a great captain of industry. Yet the reason that women have achieved no great triumph in literature, art, or industry is that their genius has gone into the bearing and rearing of children. When it comes to business, the male is generally superior because he can better stand the strain of hard daily labor. A man goes into business or profession for a life-work. It is not the natural sphere of woman. There are plenty of exceptions to the rule, of course. When it comes to the moralities, the female sex is often superior. Women frequently are the backbone of the churches and of every good and philanthropic work. The female sex is superior to the male in the domestic virtues. . . . But it is foolish to try to compare the sexes. All humanity is cut off the same bolt of cloth. In strength of body, in power of intellect, in breadth of thought man is woman's superior; yet in depth and faithfulness of love, in the capability of feeling and enduring, in devotedness and fortitude, in moral intuition, woman is man's superior." The design of God is that woman should be man's helpmeet.

2.

Another great truth exhibited here is that the institution of marriage is a divine ordinance. We read that after God had created woman and man had awakened from his sleep, He "brought her to man." And recognizing in her one like unto himself in every respect and suitable to be his companion, such as he had not found among all the creatures to which he had given suitable names, he received her from God as his wife. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." We may note several particulars here on the institution of marriage.

God Himself established the marriage state. It is not a human invention, not merely a contract or a tradition. It is a divine institution. God not only created the first pair, but He brought them together and united them in marriage.

Again, God declares here that the natural and proper state of man and woman is marriage. "It is not good that the man should be alone." Celibacy is not regarded in the Bible with greater favor by God than the married state. On the contrary: 1 Cor. 7, 2; 1 Tim. 4, 1—3 a; Heb. 13, 4 a.

Again, God made the woman *for* the man, to be a helpmeet for him, 1 Cor. 11, 8. 9. God made the woman *out* of man to intimate that the closest union and the most affectionate attachment should subsist in marriage, Gen. 2, 24; 1 Cor. 7, 3, that man should ever consider woman as a part of himself and treat her as such, Eph. 2, 25. 28. 29. 33. On the other hand: Eph. 5, 22. 23. 33; Col. 3, 18; 1 Pet. 3, 1.

"The marriage institution is the great civilizer of the world and essential to the welfare of mankind. It is the source of tenderness as well as the guardian of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes there can be no union of families; the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of the social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and were they extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved."

Marriage is for life, Matt. 19, 6. Entering holy wedlock is therefore an important step. The Christian recognizes God's hand in it. "He brought her to man." Pray God for a Christian wife or husband, as the case may be. Prayer will guard you against thoughtless and hasty action. — Again, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Honor them with your confidence. Consult them. Do not disregard their advice in this important matter. Secret and clandestine marriages are not in accord with the will of God.

Once entered into, marriage cannot be dissolved at will. And no Christian will countenance the evil of divorce. Let it be said that divorce prevails chiefly in circles that are indifferent to religion and God. Most matrimonial wrecks prevail where couples are unprepared to execute a solemn covenant in the name of God and to keep it by His grace. A nation cannot endure unless it preserves the sacredness and stability of the home. We need not so much better laws on divorce as more sound Biblical teaching on the sacredness of the marriage vow, the teaching of Scripture that marriage is a divine institution, which cannot be violated with impunity. Christians above all else should do all in their power to uphold this institution of God. This again shows the tremendous importance of our faith in the authority of the Bible as God's Word, faith in these opening chapters of the Bible as God's revealed truth. For if these first chapters of the Bible are myth and legend, then certainly there can be no decent respect for the marriage vow nor recognition and acknowledgment of the fact that marriage is of God and not of men. Those who have been preaching and teaching that Genesis is myth have only themselves to blame (terrible responsibility!) for the present prevalence of disrespect for marriage and the disintegration of the home which they so much deplore. It is hypocrisy to denounce as shocking and scandalous the increase in divorce among us, to lament that it is affecting the whole social system and weakening and destroying the very existence of the home, to call it a grave menace to the nation, when the very foundation of marriage, the Bible, is declared in the same breath to be obsolete and mythical.

3.

The third great fact which the story of Eve brings to our notice is the origin of sin. God had planted two particular trees in the Garden of Eden to which He attached special significance. The one was the tree of life. In the fruit of this tree, God laid the power to keep man in constant youth and vigor. Had man remained in the Garden and eaten daily of this tree, he would never have grown old, wrinkles would never have furrowed his brow, his hands and feet would never have grown feeble, no member of his body would have become tired, fatigued, lame, or diseased. Man and woman would have remained in perpetual youthfulness and beauty as God had created them. The other tree in the Garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree God said: "Of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This commandment was given to man for the practise of obedience. He was to serve God by not eating of this tree. This tree, so to speak, was Adam's church. Under this tree, Adam would have gathered his children about him and taught them the love and goodness of God, the divine image which they bore, the obedience they must render God. Man was holy and good, as God had createl him, and he had the power to keep God's commandment. With this tree, God placed into man's hands the power of life and death and told him to choose.

The temptation to sin originated not in man, but came to man from without. The Tempter came to them, and he came in disguise. It is the devil who here tempts Adam and Eve to sin. Temptation to sin comes upon us like a serpent, which glides along unseen and unheard. It twines itself about its victim, softly and gently. Its skin is smooth. But when the victim seeks to escape from the toils, it finds the effort futile. For when the serpent has the victim in its grasp, it crushes it to death without pity. The power of the serpent is terrible, relentless. Of such a nature is the temptation to sin. It approaches us unseen and unheard. It comes softly and gently and insinuatingly. But its power grows upon us, it twines itself about us, and when we are in its toils, it is impossible to escape.

We have an exhibition of the insidious character of temptation here in the Garden when the serpent, the devil, came to Eve and spoke to her about the tree. "And he said unto the woman." The devil's chief avenue of approach is by word of mouth. He speaks to us when we are tempted by him. You say you have never seen or heard the devil? Be not deceived. He does not introduce himself to you as the devil. He disguises himself as he did in the Garden. He speaks to us through others. He spoke through Eve to Adam when she gave him of the fruit of that tree. He spoke through Job's wife when she said scornfully, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." He spoke through Peter when that disciple rebuked the Lord, "Be it far from Thee, Lord. This shall not be unto Thee." Jesus replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Matt. 16, 22. 23. The devil speaks to us through the newspapers and books of the day. There are many means through which he addresses himself to us. He speaks from many pulpits by the mouth of false prophets. He often speaks to the husband through the wife and to the wife through the husband; to the children through the parents and to the parents through the children. He speaks to you often in your heart, awakening evil thoughts and desires. The devil is about you day and night and is constantly speaking to you. And because the voice of the devil is not recognized, we sin daily. It was because Eve did not recognize the voice of the devil that she fell into sin and disobedience. It is therefore not enough to avoid evil books, evil newspapers and magazines and pictures, and evil people; even the words and suggestions and the advice of our best friends must be tested by God's Word. We must watch over our own evil hearts. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

The devil said to the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?" Not a statement, but a question, designedly so put as to arouse all kinds of thoughts and to start a discussion. It is dangerous when the devil starts an argument on God's Word. When the devil assaults the Church of Christ, when he tempts a Christian, he attacks God's Word. In the Scriptures, God has revealed what He desires of us, what we are to believe. Whosoever trusts this Word shall be saved. But the devil is opposed to this very Word. And his aim is to make it of doubtful worth.

"Ye shall not surely die." Cf. John 8, 44. 47. The suggestion of the devil: Do not be afraid of punishment; it would be cruel and tyrannical for God to punish a trifling act so severely. However: Ezek. 18, 20; Rom. 6, 23; 2, 9; Deut. 27, 26. God has thrown a barrier in the way to keep us from sin. But the devil makes us believe that no barrier exists and no harm is on the other side. God says: 1 Cor. 6, 10. Believe this Word, and you will guard against the sin of drunkenness in order not to forfeit the kingdom of heaven for a passing delight. But do all people abhor this evil? Why not? Because they believe the devil, who tells them that no harm can come.

"Ye shall not surely die." God's Word says: Eph. 5, 5. Why is it that so many live in uncleanness and adultery? Because they are deceived by the devil. "Ye shall not surely die." God's Word says: Prov. 30, 17. If all children heeded these words, there would be no more complaints about disobedient children. Why do we still hear such complaints? Because they are deceived by the devil. "Ye shall not surely die." So one could continue and mention every sin in the Decalog, and we should always have to come back to the one truth: the hope of escaping the consequences of sin is the fruitful mother of sin. It is a deception of the devil. "God threatens to punish all that transgress His commandments."

"In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Adam and Eve were endowed with great wisdom and knowledge. The devil promised them even greater knowledge. "God doth know." God knows that there is greater wisdom to be had after eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But He does not want you to know it. That is why He has forbidden you to eat. There are many people who allow themselves to be persuaded to believe that God begrudges them happiness, that God is depriving them of greater joy by forbidding them to do sin. But God is not depriving us of any good. He is not envious of us, nor is He hard on us. He is a gracious God. Beware of the deception of the devil! Think of Eve. Eve believed the suggestions of the devil. She doubted God's word; she disbelieved. And the logical step of her doubt and unbelief was to eat of the tree.

A tremendous change now took place in Eve and in Adam as well. Before, she believed God and trusted Him; now her faith and trust are gone. Before, she knew God to be gracious and good; now she thinks of God as a hard and fearful tyrant. Before, she knew that it was wrong to eat of the tree; now she sees no wrong in the act of eating of it. Before, she was holy and pure; now she is unholy, impure, sinful. Before, she delighted in doing God's will; now His will seems irksome to her. Before, her sincere desire was to please her Creator; now her desire is to do evil. What a tremendous change has come upon man and the world!

Sin! "Name me the evil that springs not from this root, the crime that lies not at this door. Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is the sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul? Sin! Who, with icy breath, blights the sweet blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Who changes sweet children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocents? Sin! Who casts the apple of discord on home hearths?

Who lights the torch of war and carries it over happy lands? Who, by divisions in the Church, rends Christ's seamless robe? Sin! Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite to sleep and delivers the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who, with smiles on her face and honeyed flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and, when suspicion sleeps, pierces our temples with a nail? What siren is this who, seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arms around our neck to leap with us into perdition? Sin! Who petrifies the soft and gentle heart, hurls reason from her throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the precipice into the lake of fire? Sin! Who, having brought the criminal to the gallows, persuades him to refuse a pardon and with his own hand to bar the door against the messenger of mercy? What witch of hell is it that thus bewitches us? Sin! Who nailed the Son of God to that bloody tree and who, as if it were not a dove descending with the olive, but a vulture swooping down to devour the dying, vexes, grieves, thwarts, repels, drives off the Spirit of God? Who is it that makes man in his heart and habits baser than a beast and him who was once but little lower than an angel but little better than a devil? Sin! Sin, thou art a hateful and horrible thing, that 'abominable thing which God hates.' And what wonder?" (*Thomas Guthrie.*)

"Let sin be tried by its effects, and who, with a mind enlightened, can look on the sad change it has wrought on man, on the divine beauty it defaced, on the favor it forfeited, on the happiness it wrecked, on the curse it has entailed, and on the fire it has kindled, on the misery it breeds in time and perpetuates in eternity, without seeing 'sin become exceeding sinful'? Look at Eden! Man's disobedience there, his plucking the forbidden fruit, may seem to some a trivial offense; but does the misery it wrought on Adam and entailed on his posterity throughout all generations justify such a term?" (*Thomas Guthrie.*)

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken." But before driving man out, God gave him the promise of deliverance and redemption from the curse which he had brought on himself: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." The Seed of the *woman* — the Deliverer is to come of the *woman,* and by her alone, without the concurrence of man. The address is to Eve alone. It was in consequence of this promise of God that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin. This, and this alone, is what is implied in the promise of the Seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent, the devil. Jesus Christ died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and to destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus He bruised his head, destroyed his power and lordship over mankind, turning man from the power of Satan to God. And Satan bruised His heel. The salvation of man could be brought about only by the death of the Christ, 1 John 3, 8; Is. 7, 14; Micah 5, 3; Gal. 4, 4; Rom. 16, 20; Heb. 2, 14.

G. E. Hageman.

Jochebed.

Ex. 2, 9.

Great events turn on little hinges. The hammer-blow of a humble monk at Wittenberg turned history's page from the Middle Ages to the modern age. Wyneken, one of the fathers of our Synod, wrote a small missionary paper in which he recounted the hardships and the spiritual destitution of the Lutheran settlers in America and became the great pioneer Lutheran missionary of the nineteenth century in America. A little ark placed among the flags near the banks of the Nile gave the world one of its greatest men, Moses. And it was the hand of a mother which launched that little vessel.

Tell the story — Jacob, Joseph, Goshen, a new Pharaoh, oppression; the bloody edict; sorrow and woe. Out of these scenes emerge Amram and Jochebed of the tribe of Levi. They had two children, Miriam and Aaron. Then a baby boy was born to them while the ruthless campaign of the Egyptians was on. "He was a goodly child." They hid him for three months. How did they do it? Then the little ark of bulrushes, placed amid the flags near the bank of the river; the princess, her discovery and her surprise. "And, behold, the babe wept." Her compassion. "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Miriam's timid suggestion. "Go!" And "the maid went." The mother's joy. "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." Here history turns the last page. We hear no more of the princess, and Jochebed drops beyond our horizon. But what glory still rests on the memory of this mother in Israel! Jochebed means "The Lord is her glory."

Jochebed, whose Glory Was the Lord.

1.

Heb. 11, 23. "By faith." Jochebed's faith and trust in God in the greatest peril is the glory of her motherhood. There is no greater power than faith in God's promises. It is this faith which prompted her to risk her life and that of her babe. "They were not afraid of the king's commandment." Cf. Acts 5, 29.

The importance of religion in the home. The Christian home. "We are living in a time of intense bitterness and selfishness and sordid greed. But what civilization is to-day, the home life of yesterday has made it. And what civilization will be to-morrow, the home life of to-day will make it." They are true fathers and mothers who are true Christians. That is the ideal and true home where the Word of Christ dwells richly. When this is not the case: Jer. 7, 18. "Whatever fires the fathers kindle, the children are always found gathering the wood, always helping as accessories and apprentices. If the father reads a newspaper or a sporting gazette on Sunday, the family must help him find it. If he writes a business letter on Sunday, he will send his child to the office with the letter. If the mother is a scandal-monger, she will make her children spies and eavesdroppers. If she directs her servant to say to a caller at the door that she is not at home, she will sometimes be overheard by her child. If she is ambitious that her children should excel in the display of finery and fashion, they must wear the show and grow up in the spirit of it. If her house is a den of disorder and filth, they must be at home in it. Fretfulness and ill temper in the parents are provocations and therefore somewhat more efficacious than commandments to the same. The proper result will be an uncongenial assemblage, in the house, of petulance and ill nature. The niggardly parsimony that quarrels with a child when he asks for a book needed for his studies at school, is teaching him that money is worth more than knowledge. If the parents are late risers, the children must not disturb the house, but stay quiet and take a lesson that is not to assist their energy and promptness in their future calling and walk of life. If they go to church irregularly, they will not send their children there every Sunday. If they never read the Bible, they will never teach it. If they laugh at religion, they will put a face upon it which will make their children justify the contempt they express. . . . Where there is no effort to teach wrong or a thought of it, the house is yet a school of wrong, and the life of the house is only a practical drill in evil." (*Horace Bushnell.*) "Religion never so thoroughly penetrates life as when it becomes domestic."

2.

"Nurse this child for me." Jochebed, as she again clasped her babe to her bosom, no doubt was the happiest woman in all the land. But whose was the child, and for whom was she now nursing it? For the princess? Was it not really God who spoke through the princess? Had not God really restortd the child to her? Who moves the hand of man to do His will? God was her real Employer. God had chosen her for this task. In the restoration of the child to her bosom Jochebed now realized as never before the greatness of motherhood and the wonderful gift of God — her child.

Many do not agree with this truth to-day. The responsibilities of motherhood are to-day often disparaged and regarded as irksome.

"The call that the nation, the home, and the Christian Church issues to all young women who want to know how to make their life really worth living and to come to the fulness of the sacred position which God would have them assume is therefore this: Your happiness as well as the welfare of the future generations of our country depends upon your willingness, yes, your sincere and intense desire, to fulfil those high and holy obligations for which motherhood has been instituted. It may be more spectular to dream of careers; it may be more comfortable to live in a marriage relation where there are no children, to limit the social activities and keep you close to the home; it may be more up to date and fashionable to sacrifice the characteristics of true womanhood and to become a 'good pal' to the members of the opposite sex, eliminating as far as possible those evidences of maidenly reserve and modesty which should distinguish every young woman. But above this unfortunate delusion, misunderstanding, and disregard of God's ordinances the assurance rings true and clear and convincing that any girl who, avoiding the mannish tendencies of the day, enters the holy relation of marriage with an appreciation of the fact that it is a privilege to be a mother, to help build a home, to help rear a family, and who does all this in the fear of God and in the spirit of love towards the Savior, — that such a girl not only belongs in the very front ranks of the most interesting, the most useful, and the most helpful women in America, but also that she is one of the greatest constructive forces of the present age." (*Dr. W. A. Maier*. See article "Cradles or Careers" in *Walther League Messenger*, May, 1926, for other material.)

3.

"And I will give thee thy wages." No doubt royal bounty sent Jochebed a reward for nursing her child for the princess. But we may be sure that she never counted those wages at all. Who can pay a mother for the love she bears her child? Not all the riches of the world can measure the joy of mother-love.

God has implanted in every woman the instinct of motherhood. It is one of the greatest gifts of God — the privilege of loving, working, sacrificing, for the child. She asks, she expects, nothing for that privilege. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" receives here one of its greatest illustrations. The privilege of mother-love is in itself a great reward.

But Jochebed, whose name means "The Lord is her glory," had an even greater privilege and reward — to train her child in the true faith. The influence of motherhood is lasting; words learned at mother's knee are never forgotten. How important, then, that the mother exercise this influence, that she plant the seed of the Word on the child's heart! How fatal when a mother forgets this high responsibility! Prov. 31, 30 b; 22, 6; 2 Tim. 1, 5.

And certainly Jochebed had great reward. The despised slave-woman has to her credit that she mothered and trained one of the greatest men of history. "By faith Moses was hid," Heb. 11, 23. That was his mother's faith. But later, when Moses was a young man: Heb. 11, 24. That was his own faith. By the power of that faith in the true God he lifted an enslaved people and carried it through a long history to the gates of the Promised Land, Heb. 11, 27—29. It was faith in the Messiah, the Christ.

Every mother may enjoy her reward, her wages, in the lives of her children. What a privilege it is to see in her children not only the traits of father and mother, but also the working of that seed of the Word which she has planted in their hearts. She has the great reward of knowing that God has used her as an agent for the continuance of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord and Giver of life. Let every mother think of the words of our text as the great Mother Commission of God: Ex. 2, 9. G. E. HAGEMAN.

Jezebel.

Gal. 6, 7. 8.

In turning the pages of the Old Testament, we are led to enter the palace of royalty to make the acquaintance of a queen whose witchery left a trail of idolatry, licentiousness, intrigue, murder, and bloodthirstiness which probably has no equal in Bible history. It all ended in the doom of the royal house and in herself being devoured by dogs. She was the queen of Ahab, the eighth king of Israel. Solomon, you will recall, had built up a great empire and a united people. Under him the great Temple was built to Jehovah. He had opened relations with the neighboring heathen nation of the Phenicians contrary to the express command of God, Deut. 7, 3. The result was that even in his day idolatry was introduced into the land. It is really astonishing to observe that the wisest man of the Jewish race was so far beguiled by his wives in his old age that he became a worshiper of the Phenician goddess Ashtoreth. Thus corrupted, the nation suffered a disastrous blow after his death, when ten tribes seceded and formed the northern kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel, and the remaining two tribes formed the southern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. The example which Solomon had set in marrying an Egyptian princess was followed by the kings of Israel, and the result was inevitable. Ahab, king of Israel, went to Phenicia for a wife, marrying the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidon, formerly priest of the goddess Astarte, or Ashtoreth. It is this Jezebel who is the subject of our study.

Jezebel the Worst Woman of the Bible.

1.

Jezebel's zeal for her religion. She had been reared in a licentious religion, surrounded by lust and filth. And she brought her religion with her as a dowry when she married Ahab. She was a determined and energetic woman. The very first thing that we read after her marriage to Ahab is that this king "went and served Baal and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove. And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him," 1 Kings 18, 32. 33. Jezebel, instead of being Ahab's good angel, as it were, became his devil. She was a highly gifted woman, this Jezebel, and capable of great things. (Think of Ruth and Naomi.) But all her powers were surrendered to Satan. She dominated Ahab, and all her energies were employed to propagate the religion of the Phenicians in Israel. Not only was a temple to the god Baal built, but a multitude of priests and prophets were maintained at the royal palace. Idolatry was introduced with a vengeance throughout the land.

What determination and energy is displayed in all this by Jezebel! And what daring and audacity was she capable of in her cause! How often are not the children of darkness more earnest in the propagation of their false religions than the children of light in furthering the kingdom of God! Luke 16, 8; Matt. 24, 24. Think of the energy and zeal employed by the Moslem to propagate his religion. Think of the millions of dollars that are collected and expended by Christian Scientists, Mormons, Adventists, and the like, to spread their false religions. They are ceaselessly at work building mosques, and temples, and churches, and reading-rooms and advertising their heresies. Think of Modernism, placing itself in the seats of learning and seizing all the prominent places in life to spread their falsehoods. In comparison, how half-hearted, lukewarm, indifferent, and feeble are the efforts of those who profess to believe that the Gospel of the crucified Savior is the only way of life! Think of the zeal of our Lord, of His apostles, and of the early Christians; think of our early Lutherans. May God increase our zeal!

(Here a pastor may point out the *danger* lurking in mixed marriages: Roman Catholics and Protestants, etc. But the circumstances obtaining in each congregation must be considered.)

2.

"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Jezebel sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. She was bent upon introducing her heathen gods and uprooting the God of Israel, and she succeeded to the extent that only seven thousand in Israel were left who worshiped Jehovah. Idolatry dominated the whole nation through her efforts. Ahab knew better, but he yielded to her will, and he is in equal condemnation. Consider Jezebel's career — idolatry, murder (Naboth's vineyard), fraud, lies, persecution of the prophets of God, scorn of the God of Israel, who had witnessed to Himself on Carmel, her arrogance and impudence in the face of God.

Since she was a heathen, it may be argued that she did not know any better. This, however, cannot be said. God left Himself not without a witness. He sent one of the greatest preachers and prophets of the Old Testament, Elijah, who spoke to her as well as to Ahab. When Elijah came the first time and placed the curse of the drought and the famine on the land, Jezebel knew the reason — her opposition to the Lord God of Israel. When Elijah returned after three and a half years and declared, "Ye have forsaken the commandments of God," he proved by the great test on Mount Carmel to Jezebel the failure of her gods and that the Lord God of Israel was the true God. Again Elijah appeared, after having been in hiding before her wrath, and proved to her that God knew the sins of fraud and lies and murder in Naboth's case, 1 Kings 21, 23.

But throughout, Jezebel's heart was not softened, but hardened in sin, 1 Kings 19, 2. She made herself believe that she was immune. Was she not in power? Who would dare to lay hands on her? But God's hand was not shortened. Ahab was slain, and the dogs licked his blood. Her son was slain, and his body was thrown into the vineyard that had been Naboth's, 2 Kings 9, 22—26. Even when Jehu, the general, appeared before her palace, she showed her boldness and self-confidence. And God in His holy wrath took vengeance on her in most terrible fashion, 2 Kings 9, 30—37. She has no grave, so that none can say, "This is Jezebel." Her epitaph: "This cursed woman."

A French lady once said to a famous ecclesiastic, "My Lord Cardinal, God does not pay at the end of every week, but at the last He pays." There is no deviation from the inexorable law of God, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Retribution is the reaping of the harvest from the seeds which all through our earthly existence we were sowing. The sinner will be given up to his sin — left to it and in it. . . . As one of my revered instructors has remarked on these verses [our text]: 'It surely deserves notice that in very many passages of Scripture the misery of the irreclaimably impenitent is represented as the native necessary result of our own conduct. The whole economy of God's moral government would need to be altered, the constituent principles of man's nature would need to be changed, before those who live and die 'carnal' can be really happy in another world. . . . As he is sowing now, man shall reap hereafter; nay, more explicitly, *that* which he is sowing now he will reap hereafter." (*W. M. Taylor.*)

"The 'flesh' is Paul's term for unrenewed human nature. If you look at the section of this epistle to which the text belongs, you can be at no loss to discover what he means by the phrase 'he that soweth to his flesh.' For thus he writes: Gal. 5, 19—21. And lest any one should imagine that only very heinous sins, which rank in the eyes of men as crimes as well as vices, come under this classification, he has still further indicated the scope of the term when he says: 5, 26." (*W. M. Taylor.*)

"We look about us to-day and see little evidence of the triumph of Christ and His Church. We behold a Church distressed with Christ-denying heresies and rent with wide and bitter schisms. We behold a world to which Christ gave His law of love and justice — peace on earth and good will to men — torn asunder with a legion of devils of greed, and lust, and hate, and violence, and the cloud about His throne is denser and colder by far than that which one day on Olivet's slopes received Him out of His disciples' sight. Where are the signs of His coming? Where are the conquests of His empire?

Our Lord is still rejected
And by this world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned.

"But this rejected Christ holds the helm of the universe as He sits at God's right hand. When He ascended on high, He took captivity captive. All those forces and powers and persons which by their successful stratagems had held men in captivity and which appear to hold men in captivity now in reality have had their spoils wrested from them, and themselves have been made captive. The walls of the fortress of Satan have been sapped and its foundations undermined; they wait only for the touch of the Captain of our Salvation to bring them down in ruins." (*Clarence E. Macartney.*)

"When Julian the Apostate, who sought to light again the fires on the altars of the pagan gods and to destroy Christianity was on the march with his army in the campaign against Persia, in the year 363, one of the soldiers of his army said to a Christian who was being abused by the soldiery, 'Where is your Carpenter now?' 'He is making a coffin for your emperor,' was the reply of the Christian. A few months afterwards Julian received a mortal wound in battle. The rumor spread through the army that the wound was inflicted by a Christian soldier in the ranks of the Roman army, and according to the story of Theodoret, Julian, realizing that his death was at hand, dipped his hand in the blood of his wound and threw the blood towards heaven, exclaiming as he did so, 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!' Yes, the Carpenter of Nazareth, exalted to the right hand of God, is making a coffin for all the kings and kingdoms of the world." (*Macartney.*)

My dear hearer, your conscience will tell you that you also have sown to the flesh. God may have preserved you from disgraceful sins, but sinner you are. Are you going to wait for the harvest of this sin? To-day your gracious Savior is offering you an exchange — He will take your harvest and give you His. Gal. 3, 13; 2 Cor. 5, 21. What an exchange! And with it you will also receive the Holy Ghost, who makes of you a true child of God, Gal. 4, 6. (Hymn 550.)

G. E. Hageman.

The Shunammite.

2 Kings 4, 8—13.

This is one of the oddest stories in the Old Testament, the story of this woman who has no name. She is called the Shunammite because she lived in the village of Shunem, which was located in the southern part of what is now known as Galilee (southeast of Nazareth), but which then was a part of the Kingdom of Israel. Jehoram, son of wicked Ahab and Jezebel, was then king, and Elisha, the successor of Elijah, was the prophet. Our text designates her as

A Great Woman;

and when we study her character, we shall find several reasons for her greatness.

1.

She was great in godliness, chap. 4, 8—10. She was evidently an Israelitish woman ("as the Lord liveth," v. 30) and together with her husband was one of the few Israelites who remained true to the Lord in a time when the true religion of Jehovah was not very popular. She was a believer in the Messiah of Israel, the Prophet like unto Moses. It is said that, while King Jehoram "put away the image of Baal that his father had made," he nevertheless "wrought evil in the sight of the Lord" and continued to uphold some forms of idolatry, 4, 2. 3. In the days of Elijah there were but seven thousand in Israel who worshiped Jehovah, and the Shunammite evidently was one of them. She showed her piety and godliness in a very practical manner. She extended the hospitality of her home to the prophet Elisha, not only offering him meals, but also preparing a special guest-room for him. She recognized him as "an holy man of God"; she respected and honored the prophetic office and through it her God and Lord. To her the prophet was the representative of God.

This certainly was a very practical exhibition of true godliness and piety, which Christians may well emulate. To Christians the office of the Gospel ministry is a divine institution. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," said Jesus. In the ministry, Christians see not so much the man as the representative of God, of the Savior, when it exercises the Office of the Keys, administers the Sacraments, preaches the Word of God, 1 Cor. 4, 1; 12, 28. It is God who has established the ministry. This is not the view generally held to-day in religious circles. The modern tendency to turn the ministry into a lecture lyceum and a handmaid of the government has exposed the Christian ministry to disrepute and disrespect. Christians need to be reminded that this ministry is of God, and those who are called to it are the servants of God, even as Elisha in his day was the servant of the Lord. When Christians maintain the Scriptural view and teaching of the ministry, they will honor this divine institution, respect the Word of God when it is preached, because in so doing they are honoring God.

2.

She was great in contentment, vv. 11—17. Note specially her reply, v. 13: "I dwell among mine own people." She was entirely satisfied with her lot. She desired no reward for her hospitality. She was fully happy with what she had and where she was.

"Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Let go, and you receive; grasp, and you lose. There is contentment in the exercise of the principle which our Lord laid down: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In the restless age in which we live we are apt to be troubled with discontent, dissatisfaction with our lot and with what we have.

"We sat, my friend and I, at a table in the *Terasse* of the Café de la Paix. Suddenly my friend remarked, 'There come two American women.'

" 'Why so sure?' I retorted.

" 'They have the American woman's mouth. That mouth is a dead give-away.'

"They came closer, talking. Yes, they were Americans. But what did my friend mean about the mouth? I noticed that these women had a slightly discontented expression. The corners of their mouths drooped. It gave them the appearance of fault-finding, of dissatisfaction.

" 'There's only one woman who goes about with that expression,' asserted my companion, 'the American woman; usually the rich woman, who has only to ask to be given; the woman guarded from every rough contact, every anxiety. There's how she looks — discontented, envious possibly, but envious of nothing definite. You'll find plenty of unhappy faces among women of other races, plenty of sullen, rebellious faces, but you won't see that face.'

"I pondered. Why was this so?

" 'Too much for nothing,' declared my friend. 'No vital interest. No need for any sacrifice of self. No inner companionship with their men, to be found only in work together. Without understanding it, these women feel cheated. They haven't grasped the fundamental fact that what they want isn't to be given something, but to give. They want to be asked for something worth while.'

"Be asked for something. Isn't that, really, what we all want above any other desire? Something that demands our effort, our courage, our sympathy. Something that uses all our being. It isn't 'having everything' that can content us. For it is the hands denied the right to give that remain empty.

"Emptiness is abhorred both by nature and spirit. It cannot be cured by gifts, only by giving. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' is not a rhetorical sentence. It is the sober truth." (From an article in *Harper's Bazaar,* February, 1930, by Hildegarde Hawthorne.)

A poet portrays this godly contentment of the Shunammite by describing the lot of the seamstress over against one of the world's great lights of that time, Voltaire, the infidel.

Yon cottager who sits at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
Content, though mean, and cheerful, if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the livelong day,
Just earns a scanty pittance and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light.
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,

A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a treasure in the skies.
He praised perhaps for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home;
He lost in errors his vain heart prefers,
She safe in the simplicity of hers.

3.

She was great in enduring trial. (Here utilize vv. 18—37 of this chapter.) "That I may run to the man of God." (Note how the expression "the man of God" runs through the whole story.) This trial was a great blessing, for it turned her to the only source of help — God. "Paradoxical as it may appear, acquiescence in adversity is the best way out of it." "Be still and know that I am God." If we doubt, we at once become a prey to despondency, impatience, and rebellion. We are ready then to take counsel of false prophets and diviners and to open our hearts to every kind of evil. The Shunammite held fast to "the man of God." When Elisha would send his servant: v. 30. It reminds us of the Syrophenician woman and Jesus. "O woman, great is thy faith!" And her faith was certainly not put to shame, vv. 36. 37; chap. 8, 1—6. He tested her godliness. And ever after, God took care of her and blessed her faith, her giving, her sacrificing spirit. God is not a God far off, but He is nigh at hand at all times. When He seems farthest away, He is nearest to us.

Every Christian woman may be a Shunammite, a great woman, and enjoy the same blessings, 1 Tim. 4, 8; Heb. 13, 5; 1 Tim. 6, 6—8.

G. E. HAGEMAN.

Lydia.

Acts 16, 11—15. 40.

The Apostle Paul made three missionary tours, on which he preached the Gospel in nearly all the countries on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. On his second tour, "the most momentous recorded in the annals of the human race" (Stalker), he started with Barnabas, his companion, from Antioch, in Syria, and traveled west overland through the central part of Asia Minor, visiting some of the cities where they had planted the Gospel on their first tour. When they reached the heart of this country, the Holy Spirit prevented them from going either north or south, and they came to the seaport of Troas, on the Aegean Sea. There, in the night, Paul received that vision of a Macedonian who prayed that he would come over into Macedonia and help them. Paul took ship immediately from Troas and sailed across to Europe, "the most momentous act, outside the earthly life of our Lord, in all Christian history." For in crossing over to Europe, Paul, by the grace of God, bestowed the blessings of the Gospel upon Europe, the Americas, and the islands of the seas. And most remarkable of all, when Paul planted the seed of the Word on European soil, instead of meeting a Macedonian man, it was a woman "whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul." It is remarkable how often God privileged woman to be at great moments in His plan of salvation. This woman,

The First European Convert to Christ,

was none other than this Lydia, a business woman, who lived in the city of Philippi, in Macedonia.

1. Lydia the business woman.

Philippi was a Roman colony, "the chief city of that part of Macedonia," in Greece. The city was situated on the main road between Europe and Asia. East and West met there, and it was quite a busy mart of trade. Many wealthy people traveled this highway between the East and West. Lydia was really a native of Thyatira, a city in Western Asia Minor, at that time noted for its dye industry. Woolens were dyed with a purple dye made from certain berries plentiful in that region. Lydia had moved to Philippi and there was in business as "a seller of purple." She evidently had quite a lucrative trade, for she maintained a household. Whether she was in business by choice or necessity, we do not know. Some surmise that she was a widow. At any rate, she was a woman of means. And certainly it was most unusual in those days to find a woman engaged in business. This lends a distinctly modern touch to the story of Lydia.

Woman to-day has entered almost every field which formerly was occupied exclusively by man. The structure of our modern life is partly responsible for this. It is an unnatural condition, not because it was not so of olden times, but as Christians we know woman's sphere of activity is not normally in the business world. And every normal woman instinctively feels this. For in the heart of every woman is the craving for a home. "The Christian home is the ideal sphere of a Christian woman's activity, the place of her greatest usefulness, the circle which God has designated as her special domain." And Lydia evidenced this craving for woman's sphere in that, though she was engaged in business, she yet maintained a household, ruling there with distinction and charm as every woman should. Thus, though a woman may by necessity be compelled to go into the business world to earn her living, no Christian woman can lose sight of the fundamental fact that her best talents and her peculiar womanly gifts can develop only in the natural sphere of the home as wife and mother. The responsibility which rests upon the Christian mother in guiding her daughter in our modern life, 1 Tim. 5, 14; Titus 2, 4. 5. A warning may here be uttered against the trend of the times — married women leaving the home and taking a position in the business world. It so often leads to the breaking up of the home, to divorce. There can be no true home life where the wife goes out to be a wage-earner if necessity does not compel it. A large amount of our domestic trouble lies there.

2. Lydia's conversion.

Paul, who knew nothing of Lydia, yet was led by the Holy Spirit directly to this city where she lived. He did not stop at Neapolis, on the coast of Macedonia, but made straight for Philippi and tarried in the city for several days with his companions. We are not told what he did during those days. Perhaps he searched the city for that man of Macedonia whom he had seen in that vision. But he was nowhere to be found. That Macedonian merely was symbolic of the Western world's need of the Gospel, which was just as great as that of the East. Then came the Sabbath. There was no synagog in the city. But Paul learned that on the river bank, outside the city limits, there was a place where people were wont to gather for worship and prayer. Lydia, unknown to Paul, had closed her shop on that day and had gone out to this secluded spot at the riverside. When Paul and his companions found the place, he saw a few women there and sat down and spoke to them about the Savior. Lydia listened with eager attention. And as she listened, "the Lord opened her heart that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." "Her heart unfolded in love and faith and worship of the only true God as a flower opens to the rays of the glorious morning sun." It is a most beautiful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart in converting the sinner to the blessed Savior.

It reminds us of the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, John 3, 5—8. Who will explain the mysterious power of the Word of the Cross by which men and women are born again unto a new life? "How can these things be?" asked the sage Pharisee of Jesus. And certainly none of us will adequately explain the wonders of God's grace when He opens the heart and kindles in it faith in the Savior. Lydia, filled with the glow and warmth of the new life of grace in Jesus Christ, was baptized and all her household; whether they were her children or her servants, we do not know. Lydia was the first convert to Christ in Europe. And if anywhere in the world a monument were to be erected to woman, it might be here in Philippi, where Lydia, as the first-fruits of the Gospel in Europe, should stand as the symbol of that liberty wherewith Christ makes us free — Lydia at the gateway of Europe. Christianity's conquest of the whole Western world had its inception here. All the rich blessings of the Gospel of Christ poured into Europe at this place. The outcome of Lydia's conversion was the remaking of Western civilization. Big oaks from little acorns grow. The Parable of the Mustard-seed.

3. The fruits of Lydia's faith.

Faith and works, Jas. 2, 14—20. — Lydia immediately put her Christian faith to practise. Her invitation to her benefactor, v. 15. Paul here heard an echo of his own conversion, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Lydia opened her home to the apostle and his companions, and it seems reasonable to believe that in her home the famous congregation of Philippi was founded. This church received a letter from Paul, which is the most affectionate of all that he wrote. It is referred to by Paul as his "joy and crown." It was this church which "sent once and again" unto Paul's necessity while he was in Thessalonica. It was this church which remembered Paul when he was a prisoner at Rome. It was the home of Lydia which gave aid and comfort to Paul when he was beaten and imprisoned by the Philippian populace, v. 40. There is a distinctive charm about the service which this woman rendered to the cause of the Gospel.

"This loving service of the believing women continued during the Apostolic Age. Rom. 16 in particular has been called the roll of honor of Christian women. We hear there first of Phoebe, who was a servant, or deaconess, of the congregation at Cenchrea. . . . Another woman on the honor roll is Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, whom Paul mentions in highest terms of praise. . . . Other women whose names appear in this list are Mary, 'who bestowed much labor on us,' Rom. 16, 6; Tryphena and Tryphosa, 'who labor in the Lord,' v. 12; the mother of Rufus; and others. And if we turn to the letter to the Philippians, chap. 4, 2. 3, we find that Euodias and Syntyche must have been prominent church-workers. In the congregation at Philippi we have also Lydia, the seller of purple, the first convert of the Apostle Paul on European soil, whose hospitality is emphasized by Luke, Acts 16, 15. 40. Another woman who exercised the privilege of hospitality to a whole congregation was Mary, the mother of John Mark, Acts 12, 12. Nor does this exhaust the list of consecrated women of the New Testament; for Paul sends greetings from Claudia of Rome, 2 Tim. 4, 21, and includes Apphia in the salutation of the letter to Philemon, while John writes an entire letter to 'the elect lady and her children,' and he closes the letter with the words: 'The children of thy elect sister greet thee,' v. 13. . . .

"On the basis of all these passages and the historical evidence adduced it is evident that the sphere of the Christian women in the Apostolic Church was not nearly as circumscribed as certain champions of emancipation would have us believe. Within the bounds of womanly modesty, sobriety, and retirement a wide range of activities in the service of the Church was offered to every believing woman. Her natural and chief circle of activity remained, as it has been of old, the home, and her chief function and glory was that of a wife and mother. The care of the home and the children, the guiding of the house and the keeping at home, as the Lord calls it, 1 Tim. 5, 14; Titus 2, 5, the being in subjection to her husband in obedience to the Sixth Commandment, which the Bible teaches, 1 Pet. 3, 1; Eph. 5, 22 ff., those are the works of the Christian woman's 'conversation,' of her conduct and behavior. That is the very highest position to which she may aspire.

"And if the Lord has given her this highest position for which He created woman in the beginning, then He has indicated clearly where her ambition may find a legitimate outlet. It is in teaching positions in the Church where any lordship and leadership of men is not involved (and we find that from the beginning women were used as teachers of little children); it is in works of love, such as those which have made the name of Tabitha, or Dorcas, Acts 9, 36. 39, a synonym of the finest charitable endeavor in unobtrusive service; it is in the labors of deaconesses within the circle of one or more congregations (as was the case with Phoebe); it is in ministering to the Lord of their substance, according to the example of the consecrated women in the circle of Jesus' disciples. To this list we may add the ministry which is noted with such approval in the Old Testament, namely, that which provides vestments for the sanctuary of the Lord.

"The application of all these facts to present-day conditions can easily be made. . . . Ladies' aids which are established and conducted under the auspices of the congregations and are engaged in educational work for their own members and in charitable and missionary endeavors; special charitable organizations whose aim is to render particular assistance to charitable or missionary institutions and associations; altar guilds which are in charge of the paraments and vestments of the congregation and the beautifying of the chancel according to Lutheran use; sewing circles for the poor and needy at home and abroad, — all these, if rightfully managed and conducted, may certainly prove a great blessing to the Church." (*Concordia Theol. Monthly,* May, 1930, p. 357 f.) G. E. HAGEMAN.

FIVE INCIDENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Friendship.

1 Sam. 18, 1—4.

Friendship is highly prized by everybody, aside from its religious feature. It is deeper than mere kindness. Says an ancient writer: "Friendship is infinitely better than kindness." And a modern asks: "Can any treasure in this transitory pilgrimage be of more value than a friend?"

But the Bible tells us more. It reveals that by nature the heart is deceitful above all things, Jer. 17, 9; human friendships often prove the same, Prov. 25, 19; Zech. 13, 6. Ah, and did not the Savior prophetically complain (Ps. 41, 9): "My familiar friend, in whom I trusted," etc.? John 13, 18. Indeed: "Every human tie may perish, friend to friend unfaithful prove." (Hymn 465.)

Often sordid purposes make men profess friendship. "Wealth maketh many friends," Prov. 19, 4.

Is, then, friendship of no value? Must we meet all fellow-beings with distrust? The solution plainly lies in *a change of heart.* This only will make friendship God-pleasing and of sterling value. Of Saul we read: "God gave him another heart," 1 Sam. 10, 9. After that he could serve God and rule the people aright.

In our text we have —

A Model Friendship.

1. *Let us analyze the friendship of the two men before us.*
2. *Let us note how it symbolizes the exalted friendship of Jesus to us.*

1.

a) Both Jonathan and David, we have no reason to doubt, were sincere believers. They were members of the Old Testament Church. While external membership with the Church (regular attendance, active participation) is not proof positive of true inward Christianity, it would never do to doubt the genuine living Christianity of such a person. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged."

b) This common faith gave them a community of interests. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." Analogously, moral qualities will generate mutual love and esteem. Steel filings in the midst of other material will find their way to the magnet and cleave to it.

Jonathan and David also had *ideals* in common. Both were courageous and valiant. David met the giant single-handed; Jonathan scaled the rock and entered the Philistine garrison, 1 Sam. 14. Both loved their people, their country, their Church; both had humility of heart, singleness of purpose, stability of character.

c) This friendship was not shallow, but soul-deep ("loved him as his own soul"), chap. 20, 17. Self-love, hallowed and sanctified, is not only permissible, but commanded. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." You should take care of your body and above all of your soul, Matt. 16, 26. Such a friendship may exceed the attachment of relationship, 2 Sam. 1, 26. Though Jonathan never sat on a throne, we agree that he was kingly in character, which is true royalty.

d) Addison: —

> Great souls by instinct to each other turn,
> Demand alliance, and in friendship burn.

But the wicked also form friendships and alliances to further their evil designs. Pilate and Herod, Luke 23, 12; cf. Acts 23, 14.

Helpful as the assistance of godly friendship is to us, the reverse certainly holds when one associates with the worldly, whether the associations be open or secret. Therefore: "Be not conformed to this world," Rom. 12, 2. Instead of connecting with them, "come out from among them," 2 Cor. 6, 17. For "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," Jas. 4, 4. And "if any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2, 15.

e) We have here *unselfish* love, devoid of all envy. Here was a royal prince, heir apparent to the throne, who, in fostering the friendship of David, stood in his own light, and his father so told him, 1 Sam. 20, 31. Note that Jonathan naturally would have liked to be king — he was a great warrior, popular with the people, etc. And now he must see a shepherd boy supplant him. — Envy is a green-eyed monster. It was a factor in bringing Christ to the cross, Matt. 27, 18; Mark 15, 10.

f) We are also given *proofs* of Jonathan's friendship. "He *spake good* of David," chap. 19, 4. 5. And we are glad to note that for the time being he was successful, vv. 6. 7. Moreover, he was ready for further service. He even suffered the rebuke of his father, chap. 20, 30, thus sacrificing the friendship of his father for that of David.

Moreover, "he *stripped himself,*" gave to David his own apparel. The gift of one's own wearing-apparel is, in the Orient, the highest mark of honor and affection, Esther 6, 8. The robe was *princely,* indicating, if not to the public, then at least to David, that Jonathan recognized him as the future king. This robe, together with the girdle, or sash, richly embellished, was indeed a brilliant exchange David made for his shepherd's garb; it was a fit habit for the royal court. *"Even to his sword and to his bow."* A warrior loves the arms he is used to, which likely have a record; the *bow* he was accustomed to he turned over. Think of a violin virtuoso making a present of his Stradivarius to a rising competitor. Indeed, the prince was stooping to the shepherd boy; royal garments were given to the lowly one.

g) A *covenant* sealed this friendship, v. 3; chap. 20, 42; 23, 18. Many courtships and friendships are built on the *emotional;* if "simply that and nothing more," it is a foundation of sand, Matt. 6, 26. *This* friendship was to be *lasting.* A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Only a friendship which *matures* is worthy of that name. It must not die in spring (emotional), but must endure the drought of summer and the autumn winds; for this a covenant is a constant reminder and a constant help.

Proofs of *David's* friendship.

At the time of our text, David was not in a position to attest his friendship in a material way (return presents, influence at court, etc.), but later on he gave good proof of it.

(a) In not laying his hand on "the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 24, 6; 26, 9), he, no doubt, was influenced also by the friendship existing between him and Jonathan and the pact made with him.

(b) His eulogy on Saul and Jonathan, great in rhetoric, greater even in magnanimity, 2 Sam. 1. In this eulogy he paid a high tribute to Jonathan (v. 26), but there is not a note of resentment against Jonathan's father.

(c) Literally he lived up to the letter of the covenant, also in this, that Saul's seed should not be "cut off" (24, 21; 2 Sam. 21, 7). We to-day would justly consider it monstrous for a potentate newly come into power to have all kindred of the dethroned executed or assassinated; but this was then the order of the day. David, in refraining from such high-handed acts, proved an exception. And he kept the covenant not only passively, but actively, 2 Sam. 9.

2.

So we find the ideal friendship to be the product of Bible-teachings, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

More than this. Do we not, in searching the Scriptures, find also in this instance that they testify of Christ? Are we not forcibly reminded by the incidents of our text of that perfect Friend Jesus and of His model friendship over against us?

The term *friend* had a deeper meaning in Bible times than it has at present. Two persons converse: "Is he a relative of yours?" "No, merely a friend." Thus friend means little more than acquaintance. But in Bible times the word friend had a deeper meaning. In the original it is related to the word *love;* a friend means one beloved. In Jas. 2, 23 it is emphasized that Abraham "was called the friend of God." See 2 Chron. 20, 7; Is. 41, 8. We read that Abraham walked with God. The two were the closest associates; there were no secrets between them. We now understand what it means when Christ is called the Friend of publicans and sinners, Matt. 11, 19; Luke 7, 34. Towards the end of His ministry He advances His disciples from the stage of servants to that of friends, John 15, 15. He asks not merely service, but He offers confidence, intimate relationship.

How far this friendship of Jesus excels even the friendship of a Jonathan and David, which in the last analysis still showed human imperfections and was limited in resources! "What a Friend we have in Jesus!"

a) Jesus gives us His royal garb for our shepherd's outfit. The latter may do among shepherds, but not at the royal court. Our righteousnesses may answer before men, but in the holy presence of God they are as filthy rags.

b) This robe of Christ's righteousness is a *free gift.* David did not give Jonathan an equivalent for his gift.

c) "All our sins and griefs to bear." In order to do this, our Savior "stripped Himself" (text), humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, Is. 53.

d) He did more. As a means of defense He gave us the spiritual weapons we need (sword, bow; see text), the full panoply of God, Eph. 6, 10—18. They are His own weapons, not man-made (Jonathan gave *his* arms). They were used in battle by our Master and have been found effective.

All our sins. "It is finished," accomplished, Christ cried out on the cross. Heaven is now open, why not enter?

e) Not only with our great problems, not only in great crises, not only when we partake of Holy Communion, should we approach this Friend, but — "What a privilege to carry *everything* to God in prayer!" Indeed, that is exactly what is meant by God's being our *Friend.* Nothing is too trivial to talk over with God. The little child has cares which seem small to us, but not to the child, and the mother enters upon them with sympathetic understanding.

f) Jonathan could not protect David from the persecutions of his father, nor could he give David the kingdom. But Jesus, our Friend, says of His sheep, John 10, 28: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." And He wants them to be with Him in His glory.

g) Are you a friend of this great Friend? Apply the test: "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," John 15, 14. He "commands" us to apply individually both Law and Gospel and then walk in His way. For this He supplies strength. As to the Law (reproof), remember: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," Prov. 27, 6. Nathan was David's true friend when he told him to his face: "Thou art the man," 2 Sam. 12, 7. — We must prefer God's friendship to all counter-friendships, even though we find them in our own household, 1 Sam. 20, 30; Matt. 10, 36.

h) To help us keep lasting friendship with Him, God has made a *covenant* with us in Baptism. He renews it in Absolution and in Holy Communion, in every divine service, in our family devotions, and in our prayers. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," Rom. 8, 16.

Oh, how blessed the Christian because he has Jesus, yea, the Triune God Himself, for a Friend! A. W. MEYER.

Ahithophel, the Flat Failure, or the Man of Wrong Ideals.

2 Sam. 17, 23.

(Scripture-reading, 2 Sam. 17, 1—14.)

How short-sighted we human beings are when it comes to determining our course for the future! Things often turn out exactly contrary to expectations.

Take the experiences of two youths of whom the Bible tells. One, the prodigal son, was very *eager* to leave home; he saw the *mirage* of sensual delights and continued enjoyment in the distance. To gain this, he sacrificed *all* his substance, severed his relations with a loving father, invested all his time and energies in the service of sin, — and the result? He came back in rags and tatters. — The other youth, Joseph, begged piteously *not* to send him away from a loving father and to sell him into slavery — a living death. But he rose to be a mighty ruler in Egypt and an instrument of much good.

We have in our text and chapter another such outcome contrary to expectations. A man wonderfully endowed, but ending a flat failure.

In order that we may all profit from this lesson, let us see —

Why Ahithophel Proved a Failure.

1.

Ahithophel's fundamental mistake was the wrong aspect, or vision, he had of his destiny and purpose in life. He forgot that he was not created for this life and time. Never lifted up his eyes to the hills from whence came his help, Ps. 121, but was always groveling here below. (Hymn 255, 2.) In matters of temporal affairs his counsel was esteemed as highly "as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God," 2 Sam. 16, 23. And yet, because he was not guided by that oracle himself, he proved a dismal failure in the end. He proved true to his name, which in the original means "Brother of Foolishness," the man wedded to foolishness, and we shall see that he ran true to color. For "what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Matt. 16, 26; Mark 8, 36.

2.

This "foolish brother," as his name is also rendered, reminds us of a king and his court fool, or clown. The latter had pleased the king with his witticisms to such an extent that he said to him: "Here is my staff; you may keep it until you find a bigger fool than yourself." When the king was on his death-bed and felt death approaching, the court fool entered the chamber, and the king said, "I shall soon leave you." "That so? Where are you going?" "I don't know." "When are you coming back?" "Never." "How shall you fare yonder?" "I don't know." "Well, have you made provisions?" "No." "Here is that staff, king; I have found one who is a greater fool than I am."

Our body is but an "earthly house," a "tabernacle," which shall be dissolved, 2 Cor. 5, 1. For the Christian's death is but a *transfer* from the corruptible to the incorruptible, when "this mortal shall put on immortality," 1 Cor. 15. We shall then have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. 5, 1. True, the Christian takes proper care of his body, knowing it to be "the temple of the living God," 1 Cor. 6, 16. Even if we do not own a house, but only rent it, we keep it clean and take reasonable care of it, although we know that we may not live in it a long time. But we do not live and act as if we were never to move, spending all our time on furnishing and burnishing the rented place.

3.

Ahithophel cared and aimed for advancement in this life only, and therefore we may look for characteristics governed by that motive, as he was a law unto himself.

a) We observe fickleness, no fealty to his rightful sovereign, David. If self-interest be the guiding principle, you can never be certain of such a man's next step; for what may seem expedient to him to-day may appear inexpedient to him to-morrow. Whatever seems to him most tempting is his goal. Ahithophel was the trusted, confidential friend and counselor of David; but when Absalom, renegade son and rebel though he was, gained control, Ahithophel promptly trimmed his sails to the wind.

You denounce him as a traitor, an exceptional ingrate; but remember, if a man's interests center only in things of this life, you must *expect* him to change colors, to howl with the wolves. Only he is truly reliable who has a changeless Christ in this changing world for a guide.

b) We can look for *pride* in Ahithophel's make-up. An old sin this is, harking back to the angels who kept not their first estate. In some form or other it is characteristic of every unregenerate, and it is a lurking danger even to the regenerate. Members of a congregation or society are mortified at any depreciation or lack of appreciation. When their wishes are followed and their advice is sought before others, they are content and active; but how hard for even the Christian to yield leadership and to be fully and joyfully active as a subordinate in the kingdom, even though he be but a hewer of wood or a carrier of water! Josh. 9, 27. How hard to stoop and wash the disciples' feet! John 13.

Of course, an Ahithophel could not rise to the situation. When he found his counsel rejected, Hushai preferred, himself retired as privy counselor, then to him, a man of this world, "life was no longer worth living." Indeed, pride goeth before destruction. The prophet Jeremiah (chap. 49, 16) would have said to him: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee."

c) Cowardice is another trait of Ahithophel's character, and it is natural to the selfish man. The rebellion had been fomented and fostered by Ahithophel, but now, in its critical stage and fearing its collapse, he was not man enough to stand by his guns, but made a despicable exodus, leaving others to face the issue.

What a contrast between him and the followers of Christ! These know they are not responsible for final success or failure, only for faithfulness unto the end. We could never conceive of a Paul or a Peter, even when in prison, contemplating suicide. Luther, instead of despairing when confronting overwhelming odds, gives us a *battle-hymn,* offers uplifting prayers, inspiring utterances, and is an ensample to us of fortitude.

4.

Ahithophel deliberately takes his life ("put his household in order"). How sin can make a worldly-wise "a friend of foolishness"! So in order not to meet a David on his return, it is *wise,* is it, to step deliberately into the presence of the Judge of all living with blood-stained hands? Ahithophel, with his keen artifices, might have attempted to defend his actions before David, but before God, the Searcher of all hearts — never! How vain for a man to be wise if he is not wise in God! And how easily cannot God, who has the destiny of nations in His hands, render futile "the wisdom of their wise men"! Is. 29, 14; Job 12, 17. — David had prayed (2 Sam. 15, 31): "O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness," alluding, it would seem, to his name. And God heard that prayer. David wrote the 55th Psalm, it is thought, when forced to flee from Absalom; in it he alludes to this betrayal vv. 12—14. Ahithophel is a prototype of Judas.

Do we not find counterparts to-day? The stock gambler lost his savings, the embezzler finds the *exposé* imminent, there is infidelity or jealousy in wedded life, — and some short exit from life is resorted to. It proves the bankruptcy of that Ahithophelian philosophy of life; it is a flat failure.

Over against all this the statement of the psalmist stands out: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Ps. 111, 10. He that has not this fear of the Lord in his heart has not even the beginning of true wisdom, though he be acclaimed the wisest of men. Sometimes our eyes are held until He opens them. Luke 24, 16; Ps. 119, 18.

This fear of God, this knowledge of Christ who has vanquished death and brought light and immortality to light, and this trust in Him will not only lead us to the green pastures and still waters while life endures, but will be our staff and stay when we shall pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death to the bright realms above. Indeed, "a good understanding have all they that do His commandments, Ps. 111, 10. Amen. A. W. MEYER.

The Little Hebrew Maid.

2 Kings 5, 1. 2.

"Many who have learned to love the Bible from their early youth have begun by falling in love with its Old Testament stories; for over and above its precepts, promises, and doctrines it is the most charming story-book that was ever written. Its pictures are done in such fast colors that they never fade, and they have such immortal freshness that they always awaken new interest in each generation of men. They are told so simply that they are fit for the nursery and delight the mind of a little child, and they are told so gravely and with such a fulness of moral meaning, that the oldest and wisest man, in reading them, feels that they tell him more than all his lifelong experience has shown.

"One of the sweetest Bible-stories, whether for child or man, is that of the proud Syrian captain and the little Hebrew maiden. What a sublime story it is and how well adapted to catch a child's interest, this bringing together of a humble slave girl with one of the most exalted of men; this story which shows how a poor servant-maid was enabled to do for one of the nobles of the earth what all his wealth and friendships and physicians could not do! And what a lesson in providential dealings to those of older and heavier years when they read how this girl was carried away from her home and subjected to much cruel wrong and flung into slavery among strangers, as if she were the plaything of some malicious fate! And yet, how God's hand was in it all, sending this child to be a witness for Him in a foreign land and a messenger of healing and salvation to a haughty unbeliever! Ah! think through what strange and unexpected means this man was reached and turned from his idols to God. Well, these are thoughts which spring upon us as we take our first glance at the story and make us feel that it is full of intense interest and of touching beauty." (From *Women of the Bible,* by J. G. Greenhough, M. A.)

Seemingly Naaman, the commander-in-chief of Benhadad's Syrian army, a great man with his master, honored as the deliverer of his country, 1 Kings 22, is thrown together by chance with the little Hebrew slave-girl. Marauding bands from the Syrian army had gone over into the land of Israel for the purpose of capturing slaves. When these bands, or companies, returned to report to Naaman, they had in their possession a little maid. Naaman took a fancy to her, and either in the division of the booty or by purchase the little maid became his property and was turned over to his wife as one of her attendants.

We might pity the girl for her misfortune, separated from her parents, far away from home, torn from the happy associations of childhood, and subject to the cruelties usually inflicted upon slaves. But just as Joseph in Egypt won the favor of Potiphar, so the little maid won the love of her mistress. Slaves are apt to be sullen, stubborn, and disobedient, never doing their appointed work except at the threat or the swing of a whip. This little slave-girl was different. She forgot that she was a slave, forgot her own trials and troubles and studied how to serve her master and mistress to the best of her ability. She learned to love those she might have hated; for had they not captured and bought her? Such love comes only from a heart that has experienced the love of God. It is the fruit of faith, faith in the God of Israel, whose name she had learned from her parents and from the religious teachers of Israel, such as Elijah and Elisha. Possibly she had been in contact with one of the schools of the prophets and had heard or seen the miracles the prophets performed in the name of God.

The trouble that brought Elisha's name and his miracles back into her memory was the leprosy of her master. She saw that her master's countenance was sad and troubled and found out that he was stricken with that dread disease which took its deathly course unless arrested by a miracle. While she was doing the dishes or dusting the rooms, she may have overheard her mistress saying to herself, "What shall I do? Where shall I turn for help? Is there no cure for the leprosy of my husband?"

It was then that the little maid confessed her faith and suggested to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy." We can be sure that Naaman's wife quizzed her maid concerning God and the power He conferred upon His prophet: "Who is the true God? Who is this prophet? What has he done to justify your assertion that he is able to heal even a leper?" The little girl told all she knew, and told it so convincingly that a ray of hope entered her mistress's heart, and an expectant look of joy spread over her face when her husband came home and she told him what their little slave-girl had said.

Naaman may have shrugged his shoulders; for the news was "too good to be true." The maid was called in and told of her confidence that Israel's God, who made heaven and earth and promised to send a Savior to men, could cure even a leper. And Naaman acted upon the maid's suggestion, sought out the maid's country, found the prophet, went to the Jordan, washed, and was healed. Yea, more; Naaman became a worshiper of the true God, the God who is able to save to the uttermost; and when he returned to Syria, he made the true religion known and respected in Syria. So the little maid brought a great man to the Lord and thereby proved that the lowly and humble can be coworkers with God.

Leprosy is a picture of the dreadful disease of sin. The leper is a picture of the sinner. So Naaman is the representative of us all. The little maid directed him to the prophet. The prophet directed him to the Lord, who cleansed him in the Jordan. No one but the Lord can cleanse us from the leprosy of sin. How simple was the direction given to Naaman! How simple the way of salvation given to us: "Be baptized and wash away thy sins"! "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Believe these words and act upon them, even though a little child should suggest them to you.

W. M. CZAMANSKE.

The Boys of Bethel.

2 Kings 2, 23—25.

It is a sad state of affairs when a city like Bethel, once called the house of God and the gate of heaven, no longer is deserving of such a name, but has become a Beth-aven, the house of the idol, Hos. 4, 15; 10, 5. King Jeroboam was responsible for this change in the character of Bethel; for he set up two calves of gold, one in Dan and the other in Bethel, and the people went to worship there, 1 Kings 12, 26—33.

As Sodom and Gomorrah had no use for Lot, so Bethel, with its idolatrous worship, conducted by idolatrous priests, had no use for Elisha, the prophet of the true and living God. These false prophets tutored old and young to belittle and ridicule everything associated with the name of God.

1.

So when Elisha went up from Jericho to Bethel in the interest of God's kingdom, to supervise the schools of the prophets and to teach the Word of God, "there came forth little children out of the city." Did they come to welcome the prophet of God? Did they acknowledge him as a teacher sent of God? No, they came out to mock him, to ridicule and despise him. In singsong fashion they cried out after him, "Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead!" In Oriental towns to-day we find rowdies who dog the footsteps of travelers, using rude and disrespectful words, throwing sticks and stones and mud, but keeping their distance for fear of being caught and punished. On the occasion reported in our text the little children got only as far as rude and disrespectful words.

Let us examine who the mockers were. They are here called "little children." And we might get the impression that they were still too young to know who the prophet was and whom he represented. The phrase "little children" is often used in the Bible as a designation for people who have reached their teens and even beyond that. Solomon, for instance, called himself a little child when he was twenty years old, 1 Kings 3, 7; Jeremiah, when he was old enough to enter the prophetic office, Jer. 1, 6. 7. Thus we can safely assume that the mockers of Elisha were old enough to know what they were about, most likely lads in their teens, a gang of rowdies.

We hear them mocking Elisha by saying, "Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead!"

We do not know whether Elisha was bald or not. Lepers were often stricken with baldness, Lev. 13, 42—44. As lepers were unclean, so the term "baldhead" might mean, "Thou unclean man." "Go up," they say, referring most likely to the city of Bethel which stood on the highlands of Benjamin, about 3,000 feet above the sea-level. "Go up into Bethel. Our people are very anxious to see you.

We dare you to go up there. If you do, they'll give you the same treatment accorded to lepers. You'll go out faster than you came in."

We are shocked when we hear children and young people mock and ridicule the Word of God, as if it were nothing but an ancient superstition. We are shocked when they speak disrespectfully of the holy ministry, as if it were an institution that has outlived its usefulness.

The Church of God and the holy ministry have always been the targets of mud-slingers, the butt of ridicule, and the joke of fools professing themselves to be wise. Though it is true that the heart by nature is deceitful and desperately wicked and full of enmity toward God, it is also true that our youth to-day hears and learns most of its mockery of holy things from people much older, from their own parents and masters.

As the parents warble,
Their children yell and yodel.

2.

Elisha might have ignored a personal insult if it had been directed at a constitutional weakness, like baldness or some deformity. But he could not ignore the insult directed at the prophetic office to which he had been called by the Lord Himself. So "he turned back," addressing the boys of Bethel, "and cursed them," not in a fit of passion or in his own name, but "in the name of the Lord."

Insult to God's prophets is an insult to God Himself. We see this truth exemplified at Elim, where the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron. Then Moses and Aaron said: "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." Cf. Ex. 16, 1—8; 1 Sam. 8, 7; Luke 10, 16; John 15, 20; Acts 17, 18; 22, 22. 23.

If the deed of the boys of Bethel had not been a sin against the Lord, the Lord would never have visited them with such a swift and frightful retribution as here recorded. That the curse was God's is evident from the effect immediately given to it: "And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty and two children of them."

Only this kind of a miracle, a miracle of retribution and wrath upon these evil-doers, could have been understood by the people of Bethel. It was needed to check the growth of irreverence, to stop the mouths of mockers, and to remind men that God is not only kind and loving, but also holy and just, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Cf. Lev. 26, 21 ff.

True children of God say to His prophet and minister: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" On the heights of Bethel this song should have been sung: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation." Ministers come in Christ's name, saying, "Be ye reconciled to God." They lift up Christ, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Conclusion. — Is. 55, 6. 7. W. M. Czamanske.

The Conversion of Manasseh.

2 Chron. 33, 10—13.

Manasseh was the son of the pious king of Judah Hezekiah. Most painfully are we reminded that grace is not hereditary, that piety, despite the most devout and religious teaching, is not always transmitted from parent to child. Scarcely had he mounted the throne of Judah, when he insulted a father's ashes and trampled on all his counsels. There were high places, as they are called, and groves in the valley of Jehoshaphat and on the slopes of the Mount of Olives devoted to idolatry and sinful practises, which Hezekiah had broken down. Manasseh, what does he do? Builds them up again. Worse than that; he desecrated the house of God. Within the sacred enclosures of the Temple he sets up carved images, altars to Baalim and Ashtoreth, on which incense daily arose at the king's instigation. He also, we read, observed times and used enchantments; while he rejected the sacred writings and scriptures of his fathers, he listened to lying oracles and dealt with familiar spirits and with wizards. In other words, he became horribly superstitious, even as we find these two generally going hand in hand, infidelity and credulity. Worse still; deep down in the valley of Hinnom, behind his palace, he caused his own children to pass through the fire, dedicating them to bloodthirsty Moloch, the hideous idol, into whose red-hot arms infants were cast in sacrifice. We start back in horror when we read of this fearful practise. We can scarcely conceive how people could ever have entertained so fiendish and revolting an idea of the Deity as to imagine that He is pleased with the death of His own creatures, and, above all, of children, towards whom, more than to any other human beings, His heart is full of love and tenderness. If there was any sin and heathen practise which God had distinctly forbidden and denounced, it was this cruel and fearful wickedness of casting their offspring into the red-hot arms of Moloch; and to see the son of Hezekiah, on David's throne, dedicating his offspring to him fills us with shame and disgust. Yes, there is no telling where a man is going when once he has left the path of righteousness, and so into ever deeper depths of iniquity and abomination did the son of Abraham and David sink. Proud, lustful, overbearing, he became a persecutor. He poured out the innocent blood of worshipers of Jehovah like water. Innocent lives were sacrificed. Those who loved God and His religion better than a life of sin were given over to massacre and sacrifice. To death was added cruelty and torture, and tradition has it that the grand old prophet Isaiah was, at the savage command of this royal monster, whom he, as God's messenger, had faithfully reproved, ordered to be "sawn asunder." In short, the sacred account reads: "He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger."

And what did the Lord do with him? If the Lord had smitten him low, crushed the guilty miscreant under the iron heel of His vengeance, he would have only received what he rightly deserved. However, the account states: "The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people." In what way we are not told. God has innumerable ways of speaking. He may have spoken to him by blessings. He may have sent His holy prophets and seers to expostulate with him. He may have knocked at the door of his seared conscience by conjuring up in his imagination the hallowed remembrance of a parent's piety and counsels. But it was all in vain. What then? Did He commission the lightning from heaven or the pangs of some sudden disease to cut him down in a moment; or did He send him out, like Ahab, in his chariot to battle and have some bowman draw his arrow at a venture and send him reeling to a grave of despair? Not so. Be it said to the admiration of God's patience and forbearance, He tries one other rod to bring this daring, aggravated apostate to his senses. The Assyrian captains, we are informed, came against Jerusalem. Panic-stricken, in painful contrast with the brave conduct of his God-fearing father when Sennacherib's mighty host came up against the Holy City, he flees from his palace and takes shelter in a brake or large growth of thorns to elude the fury of the invader. But his pursuers track his footsteps, capture him, and loaded down with chains, he is marched in disgrace to Babylon, where he is placed in a dark and dismal dungeon. That is the first chapter of his history.

We now come to the second and great turning-point in his history. We read: "He besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." In that prison-vault in far-off Babylon God knocked at the door of his stubborn, hardened heart. Knees that never bent to Jehovah since he knelt as a child at his parent's side are now bent on that hard and clammy floor. We can imagine the agitation of soul through which he passed as the memory of his misdeeds rose before him: the desecration of God's Temple, the establishing of idolatry, his sinful and superstitious practises, the innocent blood he shed; how the recollection of these things in that silent prison-cell must have caused the tears of burning remorse to roll down his cheeks. No doubt, the despairing thought arose in his mind, Can iniquities such as mine be pardoned? Can there be forgiveness for such unparalleled, presumptuous transgressions as I have committed? And how, like a specter, the vision of the holy prophet he had slain must have risen before him, adding a new scorpion sting to his agonized conscience! And perhaps the saddest and bitterest thought may have been the realization of the terrible influence his evil example had exerted on his subjects; that he had sown broadcast the seeds of his wickedness among the thousands under his royal sway; and so there rises from his agoninzing conscience the penitent cry: "If God spares me to recover and brings me back again to my palace and capital, how I shall seek to counteract those acts of blood-guiltiness and crime!" And be it noted that it was a genuine repentance, not merely a selfish fear and sorrow. Such was the repentance of Pharaoh in Egypt, of King Saul, of Ahab, of Judas; such is the grief and regret which so many feel when God's hand is heavy upon them; regret in which there is no self-abasement, no contrition of heart, of having done wrong to God, no seeking of His pardon and favor, but just a frantic desire to have the burden taken off to return anew to the former course of ungodliness. Not so Manasseh's. "He humbled himself greatly before the Lord, his God," reads the sacred record. And he received pardon and acceptance. We read: "And He was intreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God." Bound (soul and body) in fetters, he had left Jerusalem; loosened, the possessor of a nobler liberty than he had ever enjoyed before, he returns.

And, we question, was his future life in accord with his conversion, or did he, with returning prosperity, again lapse into his old course? Nobly, let it be stated, did he stand the test. He evidenced his change of heart by cutting down, root and branch, all his old abominations. The statues of Baal and Ashtoreth disappeared; the heathen groves, the defiled altars, all were swept away. Nor was it a mere negative religion, the "ceasing to do evil." "He repaired the altar of the Lord and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel." To all of which we may also add that he was more of a king than ever before. A great revival, religious and civil, ecclesiastical and political, followed his restoration.—

Such is the historical outline of the character under survey this evening. Many are the lessons of instruction we may gather from it.

In the first place, a lesson of *encouragement.* Manasseh was a monument of divine grace. None, with this story of Manasseh recorded on the inspired pages, need ever despair of God's mercy and forgiveness. He is now — we have the statement of Holy Scripture for it — in heaven, in company with Saul, the persecutor, Zacchaeus, the extortioner, the dying thief of Calvary, proclaiming that the grace that saved him can save the vilest and most desponding. How many in our land and times resemble Manasseh, not indeed in his guilt, yet the nature of it — people who, in spite of Christian education, Scripture-knowledge, a Gospel ministry, their parents' prayers and example, have forsaken God, neglected His Word and His Church, resisted and grieved the Spirit, companied with unbelievers, sitting in the seat of the scornful, blotting every page of conscience and memory with dark stains! And yet, let not such sink down in melancholy and despair. If God's arrow of conviction has found them, if they have come to a consciousness of their past evil record, then let them, like Manasseh, send up the cry from the dungeon of their distress to the God of mercy and forgiveness on high. He will not scorn them. No, though they have scorned Him, scorned His people, scorned a father's counsel and a mother's prayers, scorned His ministers, yet He will not scorn them. Well has it been said that Manasseh is the prodigal son of the Old Testament story. We have the departure from the hallowed parental home, the life of alienation, misery, and sin, and his final restoration and return. What an encouraging mirror hung up in the gallery of Scripture for us all! "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Praise be to God, who is good, ready to forgive and full of mercy unto all them that call upon Him! 1 Tim. 1, 15. 16; Luke 15, 10. (Hymn 57.)

Again, what a lesson of earnest *warning* may be read from this account! Manasseh was a penitent, a sincere penitent, and he afterwards lived and died a true "Hebrew of the Hebrews." But the sad and deadly influence of his early life of sin was not so easily obliterated. If you read the sequel to his history, you will find that with all his efforts and zeal he could at best effect only a partial reformation. He found that personal repentance was an easier thing than national; that it was easier far to undo the effect of his father's virtues than to undo his own crimes. "Nevertheless," we read, "the people did sacrifice still in the high places." How it would embitter his closing days to see here and there polluted incense still rising from unhallowed groves and altars! Then, too, in his own private funeral and secluded tomb we can see a fruit of his early sins. By his reformation and return to the worship of his father's God he had estranged his former companions in his wild and idolatrous practises. Dying therefore though he did a believer, many tears did not follow him to the grave, nor did willing hands rear a monument to his memory; moreover, he himself, painfully aware of his inconsistent former life, gave instructions on his death-bed that his interment might take place within the precincts of his own garden. — Let us never forget, each of us, the solemn influence of our words and our deeds. Just as after a stone has been cast into the quiet lake the generated waves still go on when the disturbing cause has been for many minutes lost to sight and buried in the underlying bed of sand and mud, so when we are sunk in our last long rest, lost from the sight and from the land of the living, "gone down into silence," the ripple of our influence for good or for evil will be heard murmuring on the shores of time, in the lives of our children, associates, fellow-Christians. How careful, then, and cautious it ought to make us! Let us guard well our lips, our actions. None of us liveth unto him- or herself. We are all responsible and find ourselves reflected in those who come after us.

In conclusion one more thought. We referred to Manasseh's scorning his father's piety and prayers. And the infidel will sneeringly remark: "Well, what did they amount to? He for whom they were offered grew up a daring and defiant unbeliever." It seemed so. Year after year, half a lifetime, had elapsed, the good old king was sleeping his deep sleep in the regal sepulcher on Zion, when, lo! in yonder far-off dungeon in Babylon, Hezekiah's prayer *is* heard. Christian parent, God may leave thy prayer for the child whom thou hast dedicated to Him from his earliest infancy unanswered for years and years and thy instruction and example unaccompanied by any good results; and yet, note that, after all, not a single prayer which thou hast offered remained unheard, and not a single tear which thou hast shed remained unnoticed and unnumbered. The good seed which thou hast sown, behold, after many years it shall spring up, and there shall be fruit seen where thou hadst waited and watched in vain. Perhaps thou shalt then be before the Father's throne in glory. One of the sayings that have come down to us from the early Christian Church, attributed to the pastor of Monica, the mother of the great church father Augustine, is: "The child of many prayers never is lost." Tried is the word of the Lord: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou *shalt* find it after many days." Amen.

L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

GREAT HYMNS.

All Glory Be to God on High.

Luke 2, 14.

(*Ev. Luth. Hymn-book*, No. 261.)

The foundation of this hymn is the song of the angels in Luke 2, 14.

This was expanded and at an early date used in the Eastern Church as a psalm in the morning devotions; known as the Morning Hymn. It was held in such high esteem that we find it appended to the Scriptures in the oldest MSS. The original text was Greek. About 360 A. D. St. Hilarius, the father of Latin hymnody, with a few alterations, translated it into Latin and introduced it into the Western Church. From the eleventh century onward in the Western Church it has been a part of the service of the Mass. To this day the Roman Church uses it regularly. In the English-speaking evangelical churches it has always been used, especially in connection with the high festivals, commonly in this form: —

The Gloria in Excelsis.

Glory be to God on high and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen. —

Our hymn is a free adaptation and versification of this "Gloria in Excelsis" and comes to us from the pen of Nicolas Decius, 1529 (6?).

The impetus for its production is said to have been given by an edict of Emperor Maximilian I, 1495 A. D., by which all strife and animosity within the German Empire was set aside and general peace established. The ambiguous closing words in the original version of the first stanza are thought to refer to this (*All' Fehd' hat nun ein Ende*). This, however, is highly questionable on account of the fact that over thirty years would have elapsed between the edict and the publication of the hymn.

The hymn has been used frequently as an opening hymn at the beginning of the service.

Nicolaus Decius (von Hof), birth year unknown, originally monk, later Catholic provost of the cloister Steterburg in Wolfenbuettel, joined the evangelical cause at the beginning of the Reformation, resigned his charge, and became *Schulkollege* (teacher in higher education) in Brunswick. As a master in music, especially of the harp, he became instrumental in beautifying the musical part of the Protestant services. His own hymns were set to music by himself.

In 1524 he was called as preacher to St. Catherine's Church in Stettin. He died in 1529, after successful labors in the interest of the pure Gospel.

A Hymn of Praise and Prayer to the Glory of the Triune God.

1. *A recast of the angels' hymn.* (Stanza 1.)
2. *A confession to the Trinity:* —
    a. *To the Father, whom we praise and worship* (Stanza 2);
    b. *To the Son, our Savior and Redeemer* (Stanza 3);
    c. *To the Holy Ghost, who works in our hearts* (Stanza 4).

1.

In Stanza 1 we have a recast of an angelic hymn. As the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest," so we. No one else deserves such "glory"; for God alone is He who is "in the highest," "on high" (Matt. 4, 10; Ps. 115, 1), that is, in heaven, and therefore should be acknowledged and confessed as such.

This glory lies in close relation to the *thanks* due God for His grace and goodness, which He has revealed to us. Now and nevermore can evil touch us, present and future, even not on the Day of Judgment, Rom. 8, 31—39.

It is this grace that enables us to confess with joy that God has "good will" toward us, loves us. In possession of this good pleasure, we also obtain "peace," Rom. 5, 1. Christ is the true Prince of Peace in a twofold sense: He made peace between God and man, and He also brings peace among men in His Kingdom of Grace by sending the Spirit of peace into their hearts, Eph. 2, 14—18; Is. 2, 4. 5.

2.

A confession to the Trinity.

To the Father, whom we praise, worship, trust, and thank for the sake of His glory and majesty (1 Chron. 29, 10—13), which manifests itself in a just and wise and unchangeable rule, Ps. 2. His power is boundless; whatever He wills is done, Ps. 33, 9. And since it is a rule that is wise, just, exercised in love, it is well for us, who would suffer much if our Ruler were a capricious, changeable, fickle, ignorant, blundering Master.

To the Son. As the Father has revealed Himself in His creation and government of the world, the Son has manifested Himself in the redemption of the world. On Him the poet calls for mercy. He is addressed as *Jesus Christ,* to remind us that He is our Savior, Matt. 1, 21; and also that He is our King, who protects us against our enemies and lives and reigns forever, Matt. 28, 18. He is called God's *only Son* (John 1, 18; 3, 16) because He is the only-begotten Son, who became man in the fulness of time.

He atoned for our sins, Heb. 2, 17; Luke 19, 10. He is the Lamb of God, John 1, 29. He is the Son of God, John 10, 30; 14, 9, equal with the Father in majesty and power. To Him we cry for mercy.

To the Holy Spirit we pray for the preservation of our faith.

He is a precious Gift, Ezek. 36, 26. 27; 1 Cor. 12, 3; without Him we cannot come to Christ and obtain salvation.

He is our unfailing Comforter. Pointing to Christ, He gives us truest comfort, John 15, 26.

We pray Him to protect us against Satan's snares, 2 Thess. 3, 3; in general, against all spiritual foes and woes.

"We trust in Thee to save us." Ps. 52, 7—9; Jer. 17, 7, *i. e.,* Amen.

W. G. P.

Out of the Depths.

Ps. 130.

(*Ev. Luth. Hymn-book,* No. 415.)

This is Luther's *De Profundis,* based on Ps. 130. Like his *Ein' feste Burg,* based on Ps. 46, it is a free adaptation and not merely a "rhymed psalm" like those in the old English psalm-books. Luther tells us that he followed this rule: "Let the words come in the most natural and direct manner, which may be clearly understood, but let the thought be rendered exactly and in harmony with the psalm. Of course, having grasped the thought of the sacred writer, one must have the liberty to depart from the literal words of the psalm and to choose words which best convey the inspired burden of the text."

It is the third hymn written by the great Reformer. It was composed in 1523, published in 1524, and afterwards revised. It was later also included by Luther in his *Six German Burial Hymns,* published in 1542. The hymn at once achieved wide popularity.

During Luther's stay at Coburg, while the Augsburg Confession was being prepared and presented in that city, he found much comfort in this hymn. On February 21, 1546, when Luther's remains were lying in state in the Church of Our Dear Lady in Halle on the Saale, the congregation sang this hymn weeping.

It has long been in use in our Church as a penitential hymn and is the favorite in our circles for the confessional or preparatory services.

Let us consider —

The Prayer of a Penitent Heart.

1. Its confession of unworthiness. (Stanzas 1 and 2.)

Out of the depths of fear and terror in which the sinner finds himself on account of his sins this cry issues forth. He is, as it were, sinking in a morass of sin, or engulfed in a sea of iniquity (Ps. 69, 1. 2), or lying in a pit of despair. He is desperately in need of help.

He cries to God that He would "bow down" His ear and hear. It is a "gracious" ear. It is the grace of God alone that moves Him to listen to the sinner's plea, 1 Pet. 3, 12.

He does not plead any righteousness of his own, Ps. 130, 3; 143, 2; 6, 1. He knows that, if God would fix His "searching eye" on him, his case would be hopeless; "for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment." His confession is that of Daniel the prophet, Dan. 9, 4 ff.

This acknowledgment leads the penitent heart to lay aside all thoughts of merit or worthiness. It lays hold on the grace of God (Rom. 3, 24) in Jesus Christ. There alone can it find forgiveness. Through Christ alone can it expect to be drawn out of its pit.

All man's best and holiest deeds must fail when weighed in the balances of divine justice, Luke 17, 10. Through them we cannot expect to be justified, Eph. 2, 1—10. If any man hopes to live before God, it can be by grace alone.

Luther: "The meaning is: Since the forgiveness of sins cannot be found elsewhere than in Thee, they must lay aside all idolatry, and do it gladly; that before Thee all must bow in humility, crawl to the Cross, know Thee alone, take refuge in Thee, serve Thee, live in Thy grace and not in their own righteousness."

2. Its certain hope in God for forgiveness. (Stanzas 3—5.)

The penitent heart therefore rests its hope alone in God (1 Pet. 1, 3. 13) and in no wise builds on its own merits. This hope and trust are based on the Word of Him who cannot lie, 1 Tim. 1, 14. 15. It is a "gracious" Word, the Gospel, the good news of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

"That is my *firm* reliance," the rock of faith, which is built, not on the sinking sand of superstition, idolatry, human philosophy, human science, human reason, or human feeling, but upon this sure foundation which even the gates of hell cannot shake.

Therefore the penitent heart does not hope momentarily, temporarily, spasmodically, but continually, even when God's hand seems to be withdrawn, Ps. 130, 6. 7. The believer, as a true son of Abraham, as Israel's seed (both Abraham and Jacob are examples of firm and constant faith), should bid all fear and doubt begone.

A prayer of Luther's may be cited to show that the Reformer practised what he preached: "O my dear Lord Jesus Christ, who hast promised, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' according to this promise give me who asks, Lord, not gold or silver, but a firm faith; let me who seeks, find, not the pleasure and lust of this world, but comfort and refreshment in Thy blessed Word; open to me who knocks. I desire nothing of all that the world considers great and valuable, but give me Thy Holy Spirit that He may enlighten my heart, strengthen and comfort me in my fear and danger, and uphold me in true faith and trust in Thy grace unto my end."

In firm confidence therefore the penitent holds to the promises. His sins may have abounded, but grace much more abounds, Rom. 5, 20. 21. He is assured that the hand of God is in no way limited. His power not circumscribed, Is. 59, 1. He is the Good Shepherd (Ps. 23; John 10, 12), who will redeem Israel from all sins and grant His own the joys of everlasting life. W. G. P.

Commit Whatever Grieves Thee.

Ps. 37, 5.

(*Ev. Luth. Hymn-book*, No. 525.)

The author of this hymn, Paul Gerhardt, "the Asaph of the Lutheran Church," is "the greatest hymn-writer after Luther, whom he exceeds in flexibility of form and in smoothness of language." Some authorities rank him above Luther, expressing their admiration in terms such as these, "the greatest European hymn-writer," "the prince of German hymnists." Robert Bridges, poet laureate of England, said, "There is nothing like Paul Gerhardt."

To sketch his life briefly: He was born at Graefenhainichen, near Wittenberg, in 1607; studied at Wittenberg during some of the darkest years of the Thirty Years' War (1628—1642); served in Berlin as tutor; became provost at Mittenwalde, 1651; called to diaconate at St. Nicholas's Church in Berlin, 1657, where he remained till 1666. During the troubles between the Lutheran clergy and the Elector Frederick William, Gerhardt adhered staunchly to the Lutheran doctrine. He finally gave up his position rather than to compromise his faith. The years from 1668 or 1669 to 1676, when he died, were spent as pastor in Luebben.

The number of Gerhardt's hymns exceeds 120, many of which are classic: "O Bleeding Head and Wounded," "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadows," "All My Heart This Night Rejoices," "Why Should Sorrow Ever Grieve Me," "O Lord, How Shall I Meet Thee," etc. The hymn before us is one of the best known, also outside of German circles. (Hewitt lists eighteen English translations.)

Dr. Paul Kaiser, in his biography of Gerhardt, writes: "Hardly any of Gerhardt's many hymns are so popular as this one, which has so deeply imbedded itself in the hearts of the people. Where is the schoolchild that has not learned it, and where is the German evangelical Christian who has not often sung or said it to himself and to his God, especially in hard times!" Lauxmann calls this hymn "the most comforting of all the hymns that have resounded on Paulus Gerhardt's golden lyre."

In the original it is an acrostic on the German text of Ps. 37, 5: *"Befiehl dem Herrn deine Wege und hoffe auf ihn; er wird's wohl machen."*

As the hymn was printed already in 1653, the story that it was written after Gerhardt's "banishment" from Berlin in 1666 is not tenable.

Commit Thy Way unto the Lord!

1. The call to commit all things to the God of grace. (Stanzas 1—5.)

"Commit whatever grieves thee" — all things: troubles, cares, crosses, sorrows, etc. It is safe to do so in view of the care and providence of Him who rules the universe, Ps. 104, 2—4; 137, 5—7. He will provide help, succor, safety, etc. Therefore "repose on the Lord," Matt. 6, 25—32. God is not moved by fretting and worries, Matt. 7, 7.

God, who is all-wise, knows our needs, knows what is good for us and what not. We may rely upon it that He will do nothing to harm us. Evil may *seem* to come, obstacles may *seem* to obstruct our path. God nevertheless will take care of us, Luke 1, 37.

He is rich in ways and means. His every deed is a blessing. His path is light. No one can prevent His designs, Is. 14, 27; Ps. 33, 9—11. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Eph. 1, 20—22.

2. The admonition to trust in the midst of adversity. (Stanzas 6—8.)

Shall we, then, lose heart? Come, thou grief-riven, timorous, discouraged soul, hope on! Ps. 55, 22. Wait, be patient! Thy dark clouds have a silvery lining. In His good time the Lord will bring relief. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Stanzas seven and eight are a further encouragement to commit all things to Him "who sits as Ruler" and "guides all things well."

3. The certainty of the Lord's assistance. (Stanzas 9—11.)

The Lord may "tarry," but do not imagine that He knows not your need or that He cares not, Is. 54, 7. 8. The Tempter may whisper into your ears that the Lord has no time for such worms as we. But do not be deterred. His help is nearest when it seems farthest away, Rom. 8, 28; Heb. 12, 11.

And well for us if we have remained faithful and patient. "Child of faith" — the original has *Kind der Treue*, "child of faithfulness."

The victory, the crown of honor, the palm of glory, shall be our reward, Jas. 1, 12. We shall then break forth in songs, paeans, of praise, Ps. 30, 11. 12.

4. The closing prayer. (Stanza 12.)

A fervent prayer for redemption from all evil and strengthening, 2 Tim. 4, 18.

The following story is one of many that illustrate the power of this hymn.

A German farmer named Dobry, living near Warsaw, had fallen into arrears with his rent, and his landlord was about to eject him from his home. It was in the dead of winter, and the poor man had appealed for mercy a number of times, but in vain. The next day was to see himself and his family homeless and hopeless in the midst of snow and cold. But Dobry was a pious man. He took his troubles to his God in prayer. Together with his family he kneeled down and asked his Father in heaven to help him. The prayer refreshed and strengthened them, and as they arose from their knees, they joined together in singing "Commit Whatever Grieves Thee." When they came to the words: —

Thy work no one can hinder,
Thy labor cannot rest,
If Thou design'st Thy tender
Children should all be blest,

there was a rap at the window. Dobry himself opened it. As he did so, a raven which his grandfather had trained and set at liberty hopped into the room, carrying a shiny object in its beak. It was a beautiful, jeweled ring of great value. Dobry, trembling with excitement, took it from the bird and hastened with it to his minister. The clergyman identified it as the property of King Stanislaus. At Dobry's request the minister at once restored the ring to its royal owner.

The king sent for the honest farmer and rewarded him handsomely. Dobry was able to pay his rent, and the threatened evil was thus miraculously removed from the family. The next year King Stanislaus built Dobry a new house and gave him cattle from his own herds.

Thus Dobry's faith and trust in God was amply rewarded. Out of gratitude to God and as a monument to His almighty care the pious farmer placed a tablet over the door of his new home bearing the picture of a raven with a ring in its beak and underneath the first four lines of the stanza of Gerhardt's hymn which the family was singing at the time: —

For means it fails Thee never,
Thou always find'st a way,
Thy deeds are blessings ever,
Thy path like brightest day.

W. G. P.

One Thing's Needful.

Luke 10, 38—42.

Our last hymn in this year's series is, like the preceding, a production of German hymnody, a hymnody embracing the staggering total of 80,000 hymns, far outnumbering those in any other language. While the hymn chosen for our present study is rather long, it is nevertheless a perfect unit, harmonious in its structure, one stanza following the other in logical development, carrying forward in ever-varying application the central theme: "One thing is needful." As we have previously pointed out, any hymn, to be a truly great hymn, must be thoroughly Scriptural, for one thing. Considered from the standpoint of this supreme requirement, our hymn is a perfect masterpiece, for it is Scriptural not only in its general background, but in its every detail. Again, a great hymn must be truly lyrical. Now, our hymn is not only of great lyrical beauty and power, but there is upon it an atmosphere of serenest peace and quiet, of heavenly satisfaction and contentment. In order truly to appreciate this quality, read it when you are all alone with God; read it several times as a devotional meditation, and you will feel something at least of that celestial satisfaction, that heavenly peace, which Mary experienced as she listened intently to Jesus' words in her quiet Bethany home and which likewise took possession of its young author's heart and mind. The utter simplicity of the story of Mary and Martha is skilfully reproduced in the hymn, as is also its deep and profound meaning, which required the abundant illumination given by the young poet, who had to show what the meaning of the one thing needful is *for us*. It is withal a tender tribute of adoration to Jesus, our "One and All," our "Joy and Rest," second stanza, eighth line. Hence it is classified in our hymnal as a hymn to the Redeemer, a *Jesuslied*. Howald (*Gesch. d. deut. Literatur*, p. 324) calls it a *Heiligungslied*, a hymn on sanctification, which it certainly also is, for in content it is exceedingly rich and full.

Text and hymn both appeal to us to remember amidst all our many concerns that over and above them all —

One Thing Is Needful.

1. Where the one thing needful is found;
2. How it supplies all our needs.

1.

We all have at various times felt the need of something to fill the void in our souls. Men have tried to find ways of supplying that void in the human soul. This is apparent especially when they begin to suggest ways and means to obtain true happiness, the yearning for which is found in all men. No one will deliberately set out to bring unhappiness upon himself or his soul. But to seek the soul's happiness in externals, "midst created things" or "earthly things" or in visible, material "nature" always results in the heart's "still fretting and striving, no true, lasting happiness ever deriving"; and often we experience that the things which at first pleased us so powerfully soon became a "grievous yoke." (Cf. st. 1, ll. 3—6; st. 2, ll. 2—4.) And in its sad disillusionment the soul cries out with Ecclesiastes: "All is vanity, vanity of vanities!" That and that alone is the invariable result of the soul's quest for happiness amongst created things. The quest always ends in bitter, bleakest, blackest disappointment. Perishing pleasures, all! (St. 7, l. 7.)

But, soul, precious soul, where wilt thou find the one thing needful to fill that great, yearning void? (St. 2, l. 1.) To answer that question, our text was written and embodied in the Book, the volume of light for the soul's darkness. That it is a woman who is to guide us to find the soul's need supplied will not matter, so long only as we *find.* Martha of Bethany — Luke, to keep all details subdued, simply speaks of "a certain village," but see John 11, 1; 12, 1—3 — had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. How simple, yet how sublime! See also Luke 8, 35; Acts 22, 3. There are but two alternatives. The soul in its quest will either follow *its own* proud choice of wisdom, or it will surrender itself completely to Jesus to hear *His Word alone.* (This is the work of the Holy Spirit self-evidently.) "Mary also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." Why that word "also"? It is good for us that this little word is there. It is there to silence the critics of Mary, and critics many there are. They have imputed all manner of evil to her. She has been suspiciously daubed lazy, selfish, proud, wrapped up in herself, forgetful of others, and what not. These accusations sound suspicious, to put it mildly, in the face of Jesus' emphatic praise of Mary and His solemn warning addressed to Martha. There is in these critics a perverseness of heart almost unbelievable when we consider that Mary's most emphatically commended example is thus forthwith ignored and torn to pieces by these critics, who, as is plainly apparent, have not sat at Jesus' feet *to hear His word.* Their criticism of Mary, however, is not a criticism of Mary after all, but of the Lord, just as Martha does not make her complaint to Mary, but to the Lord. To Martha's perverse mind the Lord is at fault; the Lord is not doing the right thing. Instead of what He is doing He ought to be doing something else; instead of what He is saying He ought to be saying something else to Mary. Did you ever feel like Martha? Have you ever heard criticisms in our church which are tantamount to Martha's criticism?

However, let us for the moment forget the commendation of Mary's conduct by Jesus and return to our little word "also." The implications of that little "also" are very essential to an understanding of the entire episode. Significantly it is said of *Martha* that she received Jesus into the (her) house. (Read the story as you will, there is a *latent* contrast between receiving Jesus into the house and receiving Him into the heart which "hears.") Martha continues with her work of serving. Mary interrupts the duties of external hospitality, she leaves Martha, *kataleipo*, alone, leaves her serving alone. Martha does not pause in her servings, external hospitality, as Mary does. This explains the little word "also," and we submit that it is the only correct interpretation, for *kateleipen* can only mean that she left Martha alone with the serving, while she, Mary, did something else, *viz.*, sat at Jesus' feet to hear His word, which Martha did not consider serving. Bear in mind also that Jesus adds to His compliment "Mary chose the good part" the words: "which [*hetis* = which is of such a character as not to be] shall not be taken away from her." Mary had left Martha to serve alone; Martha, finding fault with Mary, thought she should have left Jesus alone and not to have interrupted her service of hospitality in honor of Jesus, but it was her doing the thing which Martha did not do that elicited Jesus' praise. Mary had chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her, *viz.*, that meat, or food, abiding, enduring, unto everlasting life, John 6, 27. Martha *in a sense* was laboring for the meat which perisheth. Mary's *first and foremost* concern was about the kingdom of God and His righteousness, as it was found in Christ Jesus; Martha's first and foremost concern was different from this. Her choice was plainly inferior to Mary's, even though her distracting anxiety was the outcome of affection. The reception accorded Jesus by Mary was the one of which there was need; Martha's many things, about which she was careful and troubled, were *not* first things at all. While Mary is sitting peacefully at Jesus' feet hearing His word, Martha is drawn about in different directions, distracted in mind, *periespato*. Mary undoubtedly returned to serving, to the duties of hospitality, but not in the frame of mind Martha had exhibited. For Jesus Mary forgot, left, all earthly concerns when He came to their home; Martha did not. Mary returned to the earthly things with joy and rest in her mind and heart, which Martha had not experienced without the one thing needful. The "good part" made all things new to Mary.

Where Mary found the one thing needful, there, and *only* there, any soul may find it, *viz.*, at Jesus' feet, hearing His Word. And all who have heard His Word, will gladly join our hymnist in singing: "Lord Jesus, both spirit and life is Thy Word [John 6, 63]; and is there a joy which Thou dost not afford?" (St. 4, ll. 7. 8.) Also quote and explain stanza 2, lines 5—8. "The gain of this one thing all loss can requite and teach me in all things to find true delight." (St. 1, ll. 7. 8.) Phil. 3, 7. We find the one thing needful, then, in Jesus, sitting at His feet and hearing His Word. Thus Mary is representative of the Church, which must seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness and, having found it in Christ, can add all things that pertain to serving without any mental distraction and external agitation, without that tragic zeal of God which is not according to knowledge, Rom. 10, 2; Matt. 6, 33. That is the great commendable choice!

2.

Having seen that the one thing needful, the good part, is found by hearing and heeding Jesus' Word, in preference to all other concerns of life, — only here and Col. 3, 16 have we "the Word of Christ" as identical with "the Word of God," — by completely surrendering to His teaching authority as the first and foremost prerequisite to all serving, let us now endeavor to learn how this one thing needful supplies the great void in our soul, yea, supplies all the needs of our soul. What "the lessons that Christ was revealing" (st. 3, l. 6) to Mary were our text does not say. So often in Gospel-lessons, *e. g.,* Luke 11, 28, we ask, *What* is the Word of God which we should hear and keep? What is its message? It is especially in the epistles that we find the full and comprehensive statement of *the plan of salvation.* See John 14, 26; 15, 26, etc. Again, the supreme need of every human soul is the same, and that need is forgiveness of sin, for it is sin which separates the soul from God, Is. 59, 2. And all the wisdom of the world and her "princes" has not been able to find a remedy for sin. 1 Cor. 1, 17 ff.; 2, 6—8. That wisdom which we need know for our soul's salvation from sin is found *only* in Christ, who *by God* was made wisdom for us, to us. In Him are hid, lie concealed, *all* the treasures of wisdom, Col. 2, 3. (Hymn, st. 5.) Finding this wisdom the soul need not and will not cry blankly: "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" but in the words of our hymnist: "Oh! if I of Christ have this knowledge divine, the fulness of heavenly wisdom is mine." Apply your heart unto this wisdom, because your days are numbered! Ps. 90, 12.

Every soul, aware of its sinfulness, craves for sin's remedy — *righteousness.* All the gropings of other religions can be traced to this one quest for righteousness. Aware of the soul's great need, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, Matt. 5, 6. But instead of accepting the *perfect* righteousness of Christ, the *holy, harmless, sinless* Christ of God, Heb. 7, 26, they follow after self-righteousness, which is of the Law, Phil. 3, 9. See the religious struggle in Tolstoy's soul, since his excommunication, 1901—1910, in Poteat's *The Scandal of the Cross.* Through Christ, in Christ alone, we have immaculate righteousness. Christ Crucified is our only oblation, expiatory sacrifice, which we bring before God in faith. He clothes the repentant believer with the garments of salvation, with the robe of righteousness, Is. 61, 10; Gal. 3, 27. Cp. also John 16, 10. Of this righteousness we sing in stanza 6. (Compare also Zinzendorf's triumphant "Jesus, Thy

Blood and Righteousness," No. 326. The English translation is by John Wesley, who greatly admired the hymns of Germany's Gospel-singers.)

Through faith in this righteousness we are sanctified, *i. e.,* set apart unto God. Whatever we need for our journey to heaven, for our sanctification, is given to us in Christ. He did not merely lay down His life for us, but He left us His life as an example for all believers that we should follow His steps, 1 Pet. 2, 21. We need not go astray, for we are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, v. 25. See also Phil. 3, 10—14; John 17, 19. (It is a pity that Frances Elizabeth Cox, whose translation is in many ways excellent, introduces the word *redemption* here in stanza 7, which in the original deals only with *sanctification.*)

Continuing on the basis of 1 Cor. 1, 30, our young poet Johann Heinrich Schroeder (1667—1699) next sings of Christ as our Redemption. After His death upon the cross, by which Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, being offered once to bear the sins of many, He entered into heaven itself, the holy place not made with hands, Heb. 9, 24. 25. Thus He became the Author of eternal salvation, called, saluted, by God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Heb. 5, 9. 10. By His own blood, not by the blood of sacrificial animals, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption, *lytrosin,* for us, Heb. 9, 12. 25. By this redemption He has "unbound our spirit from hell's dark dominion" and given us perfect freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, crying directly to God in our hearts: "Abba, Father," Heb. 10, 19; Eph. 2, 18; Gal. 4, 6. (Stanza 8.)

The Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, also feeds the flock, leads it forth in green pastures beside waters still, so that peace and joy its spirit fill. Thus we have true, abiding, enduring happiness. (St. 9; also st. 1, l. 5.) Ps. 23; John 10, 1—21.

The hymn closes very fittingly with a holy resolve that Jesus shall be our One, our All. (St. 10 and 2, l. 8.) See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me, O God, in the way everlasting, Ps. 139, 24. "This one thing is needful, all others are vain; I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain." Phil. 3, 8. (Again, in the German we have the finer close; the hymn beginning, *Eins ist not,* comes to a perfect conclusion in the declaration, *Dies eine ist not.*)

Thus, sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His Word, we receive perfect and full supply of all the needs of our soul, if only we accept Him in faith. And this attitude towards Jesus has the blessed promise and assurance, experienced by Mary of Bethany, by our hymn-writer, and by countless others: "It shall not be taken away," v. 42. "Happy Zion, what a happy lot is thine!" Hymn 465, 1.

Special Notes. — Johann Heinrich Schroeder, the author of this truly beautiful hymn, born 1667 (not 1666, as our German hymn-book states beneath the hymn; in the *Verzeichnis* it is correctly given) at Springe, near Hanover, died at the early age of 32 — from what cause seems nowhere to be found — at Meseberg, not Merseberg, near Magdeburg, 1699. He studied at Leipzig under August Herman Francke (1663—1727), whose lectures influenced him profoundly.

He is best known by the four hymns he contributed to the *Geistreiches Gesangbuch,* Halle, 1697, repeated in *Geistreiches Gesangbuch,* Darmstadt, 1698, and in Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch,* 1704. In the same books are two hymns by his wife, Tranquilla Sophia, *née* Wolf, who died April 29, 1697 at Meseberg, where J. H. Schroeder was pastor, entering on his pastorate on his birthday, October 4, 1696, on the 17th Sunday after Trinity.

Two of Schroeder's hymns have passed into English, *viz., Jesu, hilf siegen, du Fuerste des Lebens,"* No. 330 in the *Kirchenbuch fuer Ev.-Luth. Gemeinden,* a companion to his wife's hymn *Trautster Jesu, Ehrenkoenig,* translated by Dr. H. Mills, 1856: "Jesus, Help Conquer, Thou Prince Ever-living," a hymn of Christian warfare, originally having fourteen stanzas of six lines each, and our hymn, which has been thrice translated into English: 1) by Miss Frances Elizabeth Cox, 1841 in *Sacred Songs from the German* (her best-known translation is Gellert's Easter hymn "Jesus Lives! No Longer Now can Thy Terrors, Death, Appal Me," No. 222 in our hymnal); 2) by Miss C. Winkworth, 1855; 3) by Dr. H. Mills, 1856. These translations by various authors show the admiration the hymn has evoked. Schroeder's hymns are very good examples of the *early* productions of the Pietists, being genuine and earnest outpourings of love to Christ, not unmixed, however, with chiliastic hopes, a feature which evoked an accusation of chiliasm from the theological faculty of Wittenberg. He belongs, with A. H. Francke, A. Freylinghausen, Barth. Crasselius, etc., to the so-called earlier Halle group of hymnists. The melody to which the hymn is sung in our circles is by Dr. F. Layritz, 1849, 152 years later than the first appearance of the hymn. See Dr. Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* for interesting comments on an older melody, which by its taking character is said to have greatly added to the popularity of the hymn also in England, Ireland, and Scotland. This melody is by J. Neander, 1680. O. W. Wismar.

Jesus, Lover of My Soul.

Ps. 73, 25. 26.

"A good hymn is the most difficult thing in the world to write," said no less a poet than Alfred Tennyson (1809—92), author of *Crossing the Bar,* the crown of his life's work in his son's opinion. He did not write a hymn. Nor did Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Byron, Browning, Shelley, contribute a product of their pens to the enduring songs of the Church. Some of them, it is true, would not have cared to write church-hymns, but in the case of others we must explain the situation by the difficulty of the task of writing a good hymn.

This difficulty is still better appreciated when we recall that even among the devoted sacred poets we find but few who achieved success. Thus A. M. Toplady (1740—78) wrote a total of 133 hymns, but only one has attained immortality, "Rock of Ages."[1] J. Monsell (1811—75) wrote 301 hymns, but perhaps only one of the 301 can be ranked as a universal favorite: "Fight the Good Fight" (No. 376 in our hymnal). The same or a very similar proportion applies to such eminent hymn-writers as Wm. Cowper, John Newton, Philip Doddridge, James Montgomery, Christopher Wordsworth, Reginald Heber, or, to mention two American hymn-writers, Ray Palmer, author of "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," and George Duffield, who wrote "Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus." Indeed, it is a difficult task even for a gifted religious poet to write a great hymn.

However, there seems to be an exception to this rule when we consider the achievements of the two greatest hymn-writers of the English language, *viz.,* Isaac Watts (1674—1748) and Charles Wesley (1708—88), who share an equal place in English hymnody. But when we find that Watts wrote over 600 hymns and Charles Wesley over 6,000 (*sic!*), how few even of theirs can be called great hymns! (Our hymn-book contains 42 of Watts's and 25 of Wesley's. But the true greatness of their hymns is to be judged rather from the fact that from twelve to twenty by each one appear in practically all Christian hymnals.)

With this general consideration in mind, let us approach the study of our beautiful hymn "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," the best-loved and most widely known of Charles Wesley's hymns. It is so personal and direct in its appeal that we cannot but choose the title he gives the Savior as our subject: —

Jesus, Lover of My Soul.

1. *The ever-present Refuge,*
2. *The all-sufficing Righteousness of my soul.*

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[1] For a review of this hymn, by *some* considered the greatest of all in English hymnology, see CONCORDIA PULPIT, 1930, p. 325. In line eleven of the first paragraph please insert after the word "passages": "of Holy Scripture it is one."

1.

Only a true, sincere Christian can speak to the Savior with such an intimate, fervent appeal: "Jesus, Lover of my soul." For only a true Christian knows the *value* of his soul, not only as compared with the whole world, the physical universe, Matt. 16, 26, but especially as seen in the redemption of that soul from eternal ruin through the death of Christ, His precious blood, 1 Pet. 1, 19. Exception has often been taken to this intimacy, this fervent fellowship, found in so many of Charles Wesley's hymns, especially to this title given to our Savior, "Lover of my soul." But despite the critics the Church has gone on singing the hymn just the same, just as the German Christians have sung *"Seelenbraeutigam, Jesu, Gotteslamm,"* and *"Jesu, meine Freude, meines Herzens Weide"* (Nos. 260 and 251 in the German hymnal) in spite of the critics. We find this title of Jesus also in Rev. Rimbach's translation of v. 4 of the German hymn No. 252: "Naught is lovelier than Thou, Fairest Lover, Gentle Lover, Sweetest Lover." (English hymnal, No. 89.) You might as well condemn John the Baptist for calling Jesus the Bridegroom, John 3, 29, and Jesus Himself for referring to Himself as the Bridegroom, Luke 5, 34, of the Church, the assembly of souls united with Him as closely as the vine and its branches, John 15. See also Eph. 5, 32; Rev. 18, 23. (It is interesting to note in passing that in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, 11, 26, we read: "But Thou sparest all because they are Thine, O sovereign Lord, Thou Lover of souls.") Read the Song of Solomon.

Among those who felt the hymn to be too subjective, too emotional, too personal, was none other than John Wesley himself, the poet's elder brother, founder of the movement called Methodism, who did not use the hymn in his religious meetings. It was not included in the official *Methodist Hymn-book* until the year 1797, nine years after Charles Wesley's death and almost sixty years after its composition. Stranger than fiction is also the fact that A. M. Toplady, the Calvinistic opponent of the Arminian Wesleys, included the hymn in his collection of hymns in 1776, together with his own "Rock of Ages." During the past one hundred years this hymn of Wesley's has been used ever more and more extensively, expressing for thousands upon thousands their "soul's sincere desire." Read Ps. 130.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?

Trials, troubles, temptations, tribulations, have you none? A disciple of Jesus, and you have none? Ah, there is a strangely sad strain in the song of the Church's soul of all ages. Why it is so we cannot always tell, but the pathetic fact is written in the Book of Life in letters which cannot fade: "We must, we must (*dei hemas*), through much tribulation [*lit.*, many tribulations] enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14, 22. There is no escape from that little word *must*. There was none for the Master; there is none for His disciple, not even in the twentieth century. "All, *all*" (again there is no exception), "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3, 12. See John 15, 20. There is a great company in all ages whose epitaph was written by the Sower in words of tragic pathos: They on the rocky ground are they that hear the Word and receive it with joy; and these have no root in themselves and so endure for a time; afterward, when affliction, tribulation, temptation, or persecution ariseth *because of the Word,* for the Word's sake, they fall away. Matt. 13, 20. 21; Mark 4, 17; Luke 8, 13.

These passages throw precious light upon many statements in the psalms, precious words, which, however, mean little or nothing to the soul inexperienced in affliction and trial. Thus in Ps. 55 we read: "My heart is sore pained [doth writhe] within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly and be at rest. . . . I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest [haste me to a shelter from the stormy wind and tempest]," Ps. 55, 4—6. 8. What is the reason that David is thus complaining and moaning? Ah, he is being oppressed and persecuted by the enemy, the wicked, v. 3. (The words of v. 6 are used as a basis for the beautiful anonymous Latin hymn *Ecquis binas columbinas Alas dabit animae, Ut ad almam Crucis palmam Evolet citissime!* See *Corolla Hymnorum Sacrorum* by John Lord Hayes, p. 168. Did Wesley know this hymn? If so, it certainly helped him in writing his "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Remember that both John and Charles Wesley were highly educated men, the former a brilliant linguist, Charles gifted poet, an artist in literary expression.) Or take the words of our text: "My flesh and my heart faileth," is consumed. Why? What is the trouble? Ah, the psalmist, Asaph, has tried to solve the mystery of the divine government of this world. There *seems* to him to be no harmony in the moral government of humanity by God. The wicked and proud *seem* to prosper, while the clean in heart are plagued and chastised, Ps. 73, 1. 3. 13. 14. The same problem confronts the saint in Pss. 42 and 43. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" In Ps. 69 David cries from out of his afflicted soul: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in even to the [my] soul. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up," vv. 1. 2. 15. In all of these cries of the soul for refuge, for help, and for a stay it is the persecution and affliction of the ungodly, the deceitful, the oppressors, that cause its anguish. Add to these troubles the accusing conscience resulting from doubt, and we have enough background to understand the language of the first and second stanzas of our hymn. Ps. 91, 1. 4 underlies the exquisite clause at the end of the second stanza. See also Ps. 18, 5; 88, 17; 124, 4. 5; 144, 7. In the soul's anguish and trouble Christ, its Lover, is its only Refuge. But is He an *ever-present* Refuge? So often there seems to be delay, postponement of our prayer's request. It is the "How long, O Lord?" of the psalms that we hear in the third stanza. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," Ps. 55, 22, reechoed by Peter in his first epistle, chap. 5, 7: "casting all your care upon Him" (Septuagint), underlies line 4, while line 5 evidently reproduces Peter's experience on the Sea of Galilee, Matt. 14, 28—31.

Thus the soul in all its trials, afflictions, tribulations, doubts, anguishes, as it labors and is heavy laden, finds in Jesus its only and ever-present Refuge, its Haven, Help, Covert, Rest, Strength, and *Life,* Rom. 8, 35. 38. 39; Matt. 11, 28; Ps. 116, 7—10.2) "Return, O my soul, unto thy rest." (Remember that Wesley himself placed above this hymn the heading "In Temptation" = *Trial.*)

2.

Jesus, however, stands in this relationship of Helper and Refuge to the soul of those only who believe in Him as their righteousness. For the Christian religion revolves round two focal points, holiness and redemption. The deepest yearning of his soul is for righteousness, holiness. But finding ourselves "all unrighteousness" and "false and full of sin" (stanza 4 of hymn), we need nothing so much for our soul as redemption, forgiveness. Christianity, while it forfeits not a tittle on the score of righteousness or holiness, becomes the *only* religion of redemption, because it is the religion of forgiveness, of pardon. Without pardon, divine pardon, no peace, no divine peace, for the soul. "Pardon alone conciliates the spotless purity of perfection with the infinite pity to weakness; that is to say, it preserves and defends the idea of holiness while giving full scope to that of love." (Amiel, *Journal,* 1870.)

Ah, soul, there is one in whom you find "more than all." It is Jesus, the Lover of your soul, who is the Christ of God, the Messiah, your Prophet, the Word Incarnate; your Priest, whose name is just and holy, who needed not to bring sacrifice to God, for any sins of His own, who notwithstanding gave Himself into death, both Gift and Giver, for the complete propitiation of your sin and my sin; yea, He died for all, for the sin of every soul of man, that as King of Righteousness and King of your soul He might rule and reign within us, as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Verily, here is "Love Divine, all loves excelling." — Whom have I in heaven? Jesus. By

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2) *Cor nostrum inquietum est donec requiescat in Te.* (*Augustini Confessiones,* I, 1.)

faith "I know that my Redeemer lives And ever prays for me; A token of His love He gives, A pledge of liberty." (Hymn 245, by Charles Wesley.) "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" And having Thee, I desire not, I have no delight in (upon) the earth. (So literally.) Cp. Luther's masterly translation and Martin Schelling's superb hymn starting from this psalm verse: "I scorn the richest earthly lot, E'en heaven and earth *attract me* not, If only Thou be near me." (No. 366.) Exactly that is what Asaph is saying. Whom have I in heaven? And having Thee, I take no delight in the earth; *die ganze Welt nicht freuet mich.* "My heart and my flesh faileth," is consumed; *wenn mir gleich mein Herz zerbricht,* "though my heart be like to break." The rock of my heart and my portion (possession) is *God,* God in Christ, who purchased me by His blood to be God's. Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are pure in heart, as have cleansed their heart and washed their hands in innocency, Ps. 73, 1. 13, in the innocent blood of Christ, *by faith.*

By faith Christ also comes unto our hearts for growth in holiness. "Spring Thou up within my heart, Fountain of life, Rise to all eternity." The Water of Life shall be in the believer "a well of water springing up into eternal life," John 4, 13. 14. I am continually with Thee; Thou holdest my right hand. Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory. Ps. 73, 23. 24. Ah, soul, with such promises vowed thee by such a Lover, cast thy burden upon the Lord; He will sustain thee; He will never suffer the righteous to be moved, Ps. 55, 22. Now repeat stanzas 4 and 5 of the hymn. Righteousness all-sufficing for redemption and sanctification.

Surely we will all agree with Dr. Geo. Duffield, author of "Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus," in his tribute to this hymn of Charles Wesley: "If there is anything in Christian *experience* of joy and sorrow, of affliction and prosperity, of life and death, that hymn is *the* hymn of the ages."

Let us take this hymn and learn it by heart, so that we have wherewith the soul may fly to Jesus, her *Lover,* in the evil day, in the hour of need, to Christ, who is ever the present Help and Refuge of the troubled soul and its all-sufficient, superabundant Righteousness. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant us all His Holy Spirit! Then our souls will unite in the triumphant song of the saints of the Church of all ages and confess: —

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find.
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness:
False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

Special Notes. — Whereas more than twenty alterations have been attempted by the "tinkerers" for the first four lines alone, the text given in our hymnal is very nearly identical with Wesley's original, except Jesus for Jesu, the Latin vocative, in stanza 1, line 1, and in line 6 "is" for the subjunctive "be," changes, by the way, for the better, as they accord with the trend of the language to drop Latin (foreign) vocatives as well as subjunctives. In stanza 1, line 3, Wesley wrote: "While *the nearer waters* roll." Reeves, *The Hymn as Literature* (p. 173) interprets "nearer" as being an adverb modifying "roll." It would then balance with the adverb "still" in the next line. The third stanza is omitted in most hymnals for no good reason. "A shade too fervent for the steady hymn-book?" Hardly. Cf. text.

What are lines 3 and 4 in stanza 4? Intercession or personal prayer of the suppliant? Certainly the latter, or the unity of thought in the stanza would be completely broken. The verbs in line 3, stanza 3, prepare for these adjective-nouns, singular number, in stanza 4, lines 3 and 4.

Viewing our hymn merely as a lyrical poem, we shall, after repeated readings, readily assent to George Saintbury's estimate: "The mere word-music of it is fingered throughout in the most absolutely adequate manner." All but 36 of the 236 words in the hymn are monosyllables. No wonder it has become so popular!

What about the "tunes" for our hymn? Strange to say, the simple, direct, artless melody of Simeon B. Marsh (1798—1877, an American vocalist) known as "Martyn," composed in 1834, almost a century later, has displaced practically all other "tunes," at least in the United States, such as J. B. Dykes's "Hollingside" (1861), Joseph Parry's "Aberystwyth" (1879), and Joseph Barnby's "St. Fabian." And yet Marsh did not write his melody originally for our hymn, but for one beginning, "Mary to Her Savior's Tomb Hasted at the Early Dawn," and for use with a children's choir. Some years later Dr. Thomas Hastings, author of the tune "Toplady" for "Rock of Ages," discovered that the tune was better adapted to "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" than to the hymn selected by Simeon B. Marsh. (See Allan Sutherland's *Famous Hymns of the World.*)

The foolishly invented fables or fairy-tales regarding the origin of Wesley's great hymn are *all* to be rejected as absolutely without any foundation in fact, as is usually the case with such "charming" stuff. It was written shortly after the great spiritual change which Charles Wesley underwent in 1738 and was published within a few months of the official date (1739) given for the founding of Methodism in *Hymns and Sacred Poems,* 96 hymns, among them "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," which opens the collection (No. 108 in our hymnal) and "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"

(No. 154), the three most popular of all of Wesley's hymns. This collection appeared early in 1740. We must remember that the Wesleys used their hymns not merely for emotional expression of the soul's worship, but as a means of instruction; and a very powerful and effective medium of instruction they were and ever will be. Neither John nor Charles Wesley ever left the Anglican communion. A perusal of their lives is most stimulating reading, especially for ministers of "a free Church in a free State."

Wesley's "Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown," an exquisite lyric, based on Jacob's wrestling at Peniel, called forth Isaac Watts's generous praise: "It is worth all the verse I have ever written." Read it, please, and sense its powers of expression.

Finally, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" is found in two Latin translations, *viz.*, R. Bingham's *Meae Animae Amator* (1871) and H. M. Macgill's *Jesu! Animae Amator* (1876). O. W. Wismar.

From Greenland's Icy Mountains.

2 Kings 7, 9.

Among the 1,189 chapters into which the Bible has been divided there are some that cause us to wonder at first thought why they have been incorporated permanently into the Book of Life, for they *seem* to contain no direct message for us or for our present age. You may have been in such a quandary about our text chapter read at the lectern before, 2 Kings 7. Yet, after meditating on this chapter, you will find it brimful of valuable teachings for your spiritual life. To illustrate, let us glance at the four lepers' conversation in our text. (Lepers = outcasts, sinners.) Listen to them. "We do not well." All four make this same frank confession. Why do they not well? "This day is a day of *good tidings* (b'srah), and we hold our peace." Note how specific their confession is. They acknowledge the *inconsistency* of their conduct. "If we tarry till dawn, punishment [so literally] will come upon us." They believe in retribution for their inconsistent and selfish conduct. Do you believe in moral accountability even for sins of omission, for *neglect* of moral or spiritual obligations? even if it be but a case of holding your peace when duty demands that you speak? Verily, we can learn from these four lepers. But they speak on. "Now, therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household." The enemy is routed by divine interposition, the siege of our city is lifted. Let us tell the glad tidings to our brethren, for they are still in fear of death. Ah, here is true, genuine repentance. Do you still think there is no message for you in this remarkable chapter? — We have here a most earnest reminder of our missionary duty as Christians, as subjects of the King of kings, while the day of good tidings, the time of grace, is upon us. Delay or neglect in regard to this duty is both inconsistent and culpable.

The hymn selected as an accompaniment to our text is an additional ringing reminder, appealing to our deepest Christian conscience, most persuasively pressing the duty and blessed privilege of mission-work upon us. Though written as far back as 1819, over a century ago, it still stands as the greatest (foreign) mission-hymn in the English language. In its day it was a trumpet-call such as the Church in England had never yet heard in sacred song. Both text and hymn rouse us to reconsider our solemn obligation to be Christ's witnesses to all who know Him not as their soul's only Salvation. Let us learn anew that —

We Christians are in Duty Bound to Publish Christ's Salvation to All Nations,

1. *Because our supreme need is their supreme need;*
2. *Because Christ's salvation alone meets that supreme universal need.*

1.

Pitiable and appalling indeed was the plight of the city of Samaria, the royal capital of the Kingdom of Israel, after the long siege of Benhadad, king of Aram, Syria. Great famine had developed, so that even human flesh was resorted to in order to still the pangs of hunger. Gruesome, ghastly famine! 2 Kings 6, 26—31. A visitation for the sins of people and their king, Jehoram, son of Ahab. But God had published through His prophet Elisha that within twenty-four hours relief from famine would come. Peculiar form of prediction, 7, 1. 2. How *could* this come about? Very well, according to the word of the Lord, v. 16, relief came. Have you learned to believe that with the Lord *nothing* is impossible? Panicky fear seized the Arameans (Syrians) inflicted upon them by the Lord, v. 6, and silently, under cover of darkness, they fled for their lives, leaving behind all their horses and food supplies, even their camp as it was.

In utmost despair four lepers had decided to risk their lives in an effort to obtain food, death at the hands of the enemy being no worse than death by starvation. So they made their way toward the enemy's camp, vv. 3. 4. But imagine the surprise, the unbelievable joy, of these four lepers when, upon reaching the outermost part of the camp, they found all quiet, all deserted, the enemy gone; but surprised still more to find that the enemy had left everything behind. How and why all this? V. 6. It seemed too good to be true. Well, what would you have done first of all had you been one of these four lepers? You recall from the reading of the lesson how in their state of starvation they entered the very first tent to eat and drink. Well, we cannot blame them for that. But we begin to feel a little peculiar about their conduct; when they had stilled their hunger, they still selfishly tarried and carried silver and gold and clothing from the tent to hide it. Why don't they hasten to tell their famine-stricken fellow-citizens in the city that the enemy has for some mysterious reason fled and left everything behind? How much needless fear they would allay, how much hunger they could be already assuaging? The sad fact is they do not go. Instead, they enter another tent and carry thence more silver and gold and clothing and hide it. How utterly selfish! Have you ever acted like these four men? — But what is it that we hear them say *now?* Repeat text. Note their unanimity.

Up to the point of their changed attitude, how exactly these four lepers represent some of the people called Christians! Their own souls' famine appeased by the Bread of Life, their spirits revived by the Water of Life, they forget all about their afflicted fellow-men, famishing and perishing in the city of error and darkness, harassed by the fear of death. The need of others seems not to interest them; yea, often they seem unaware of the need of others, though they have but just received supplies against their needs in richest measure. Friend, the world is full of inconsistencies of conduct and attitude; but can you mention a stranger and more glaring inconsistency than that of a Christian who has filled his own soul and heart with Heaven's glad supplies and yet tells no needy one among his fellow-men of the remedy for his need? Strange, but true! Ofttimes the whole Church — *all* four lepers — has been oblivious of her duty to hold out "the lamp of life" to the benighted. And yet, what is more self-evident than that a lamp should give light to those in the dark? Hence Jesus' solemn warning to His disciples, whom He has just given new light on the mysteries of the Kingdom. (Quote and explain Mark 4, 21—25; Luke 8, 16—18.)

Ah, friend, recall your supreme need for just a moment. Without Christ, having no hope, without God in the world, dead in trespasses and sins! Eph. 2, 1. 12. Do you recognize this state? Would the description not still suit you exactly if the grace of God had not come into your life to call you out of darkness into His marvelous light? 1 Pet. 2, 9. By the preaching of the Word, of the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, you heard of the routing of the enemy of man's soul; have you forgotten entirely the need of others to hear that same message of deliverance and salvation? (Quote the first stanza of our hymn.) Wherever the darkness (ignorance) of men in regard to salvation confronts the Church, there it is her duty to hold aloft the light of the Gospel. And how great is that darkness often! All the goodness of God in giving the sunshine and rain to fructify the earth, in making the earth a beautiful abode for man, in which God's abundant gifts are strewn with lavish kindness, all this goodness of God is unheeded by man in the darkness of his unenlightened mind. In vain God's goodness appeals to the heathen to repent, Rom. 2, 4; Is. 26, 10. (Quote second stanza of hymn. Also apply Hymn 3, 2.) How sad is that state of darkness and ignorance! Instead of singing "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty," etc. (Hymn 263, 1, by Reginald Heber), the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone and is mute when he should praise the true and living God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But remember what St. Paul says: Rom. 10, 14. 15 a. Verily, our past need is the same as the supreme present need where such darkness is found. But this very need of the uninformed, spiritually ignorant heathen obligates the enlightened to show them the true light. The very love of Christ constrains us to a merciful consideration of such benighted souls, 2 Cor. 5, 14.

2.

Having seen that our supreme need is a universal need, a need found among men of all nations, our next endeavor shall be to persuade ourselves anew and more firmly than ever that Christ's salvation *alone* meets that universal and supreme need of the soul and thus feel the bounden duty which devolves upon us as witnesses of Christ's salvation.

If you are a Christian, you do not believe in the works of your own righteousness for your salvation, but in the righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. 10, 4. But Christ, being holy, harmless, guileless, perfectly righteous, without sin, died, died upon the accursed tree, the cross. For whom? For Himself? What kind of theology would that yield? No, He died not for Himself, but for all men; the Lamb of God took away the sins of the *world;* He died for our offenses, not for His own, that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord, John 1, 29; Rom. 5, 19. 21. If you believe this, you are saved, you have the Holy Spirit, who called you and enlightened you to believe this through the Gospel which you heard, it having pleased God by preaching to save them that believe, 1 Cor. 1, 21. Do you know of such as do not have this saving knowledge for lack of information? Rom. 10, 14. 15. Apply again Mark 4, 21. 25; Luke 8, 16—18. In the challenging language of our hymn: —

Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?

There simply is no greater inconsistency thinkable than that of "lighted," enlightened, souls denying the light to benighted souls. Recall those four lepers of our text. Perceiving the selfish inconsistency of their conduct in looking out only for themselves while their city was in the anguish of death because of lack of information, correct information, "glad tidings," what did they do? They repented, all four of them simultaneously, and said: "Now, therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household" what has made our souls happy, *viz.*, that *the enemy is gone,* that our city has been delivered from him, that supplies were left by him sufficient to put an end to the famine. (Satan has been overcome, we have been delivered from the fear of death, Christ has triumphed, all spiritual blessings are ours.) You see that in both instances all this is accomplished fact. But the question is one of information, of telling the glad tidings to those who do not know it; for remember that you, too, would not know it if some messenger had not told you. As you found no rest for your soul, no peace of conscience, no reconciliation with God, until you learned to know the salvation of Christ, so those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death will find no peace, no pardon, no salvation, until they know of, and believe in, the salvation of Christ, for in spite of all that enemies of God's Word may say, *sin* is man's great affliction, and against sin only one can prevail: the Savior Jesus Christ, Rom. 5, 1. 12—21. Culture, civilization, science, these much-abused idols of our day, cannot save even from occasional wars and many other ills, much less from the greatest ill besetting man — *sin.* Let us not offer nations our philosophic systems, our culture, our civilization, our science, which after thoughtful comparison may be inferior to their own; let us offer them what we know they cannot have by their own invention and discovery — the mystery of God in Christ and His salvation, 1 Cor. 2, 7; 2 Cor. 5, 14—21.

Is there not crying need for repentance, Christians? Have we been a light to those about us? Have we brought the lamp of life to those far off? Have we, from a feeling of inherent consistency, been publishers of Christ's salvation? If not, let us do what the four lepers of our text did, let us repent and resolve: "Now, therefore," — note the "therefore" and its solemn implication, — "come, let us go and tell the king's household," the people among all nations, who are Christ's inheritance, purchased with His blood.

Reginald Heber (1783—1826) in our hymn gives us the proper attitude of enlightened Christians when he exclaims: —

Salvation, O salvation!
  The joyful sound proclaim
Till earth's remotest nation
  Has learned Messiah's name.

Salvation is what the remotest nation needs, not social reform, not mere external uplift, not the imaginings of international fanatics and dreamers. The author of our hymn was one who added the deed to his enthusiastic words. In 1823, then forty years of age, — he was thirty-six when he wrote our hymn, — he went to Calcutta, India. He entered upon his missionary career with the holiest enthusiasm, traveling a great deal and developing a manifold activity. After three years of strenuous, self-sacrificing work, on April 3, 1826, he had the glorious experience of admitting forty-two persons to the church in a confirmation service. It was quite a strenuous and exhausting performance because of the extremely hot weather. So, retiring to his apartments, he sought refreshment by going at once into a cold bath. He delayed so long that his servant was moved to enter the room, only to find him dead. But though being dead, he yet, after more than a century, speaks to us in his gentle, persuasive missionary hymn. And since the Lord of the harvest has not yet returned, the day of good tidings is still upon us, ours is the blessed privilege to work for the salvation of souls and to pray with our hymnist: "Waft, waft, ye winds, His story, etc.

SPECIAL NOTES. — Bishop Reginald Heber (Anglican), 1783 to 1826, is represented by two other hymns in our hymnal: "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning," an Epiphany hymn, commonly called "Star of the East" (No. 181, 1), and "Holy, Holy, Holy," beyond question his greatest hymn. Tennyson considered it the greatest of all English hymns. Sung to Dr. Dykes's majestic and magnificent *Nicaea,* expressly written for it, it stands unsurpassed in the whole realm of hymnody. "The Son of God Goes Forth to War," not given in our hymnal, is Heber's next-best hymn, militant, personal, mighty, zealous.

In regard to his missionary hymn, written in 1819, it is interesting to note that both it and its tune, by Dr. Lowell Mason (1792 to 1872), who at the time of its composition, 1823, was a bank clerk in Savannah, Ga., were impromptu productions, according to tradition at least. For details see Breed's *History and Use of Hymns and Hymn-tunes,* Allan Sutherland's *Famous Hymns of the World,* etc.

The meter was a new one: 7s, 6s, 8 lines. Note the beautiful diction of the hymn, its flowing style, its ardent spirit and energy, its warm feeling of human kinship, its deep tone of loyalty to the Church and her mission. The many alliterations are so natural that we are hardly aware of them: "palmy plain," "breezes blow," "prospect pleases," "gifts of God," "lamp of life," "waft, ye winds," "pole to pole," "sinners slain," "King, Creator." But while Bishop Heber is a master jeweler, very adept in the manipulation of the precious gems of language, he often lacks the *Scriptural* strength so essential for truly great Christian hymns. (His "Holy, Holy, Holy" is an exception, for it is laden with the majesty of inspired truth.)

Thackeray describes Heber thus in *The Four Georges:* "The charming poet, the happy professor of all sorts of gifts and accomplishments, — birth, wit, fame, high character, competence, — he was the beloved priest in his home at Hodnet (there sixteen years), 1807—1823, counseling the people in their troubles, advising them in their difficulties, kneeling often at their sick-beds at the hazard of his own life; where there was strife, the peacemaker; when there was want, the free giver."

With Heber's missionary hymn compare that of John Marriott (1780—1825), which masterfully refers the work of missions to the three persons of the Trinity. It begins thus: —

Thou whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard.

O. W. WISMAR.

Abide with Me.

Luke 24, 28. 29.

"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." These words, spoken to Jesus, the "Traveler Unknown," by the two disciples of Emmaus, have a haunting beauty about them, even though they were originally a simple invitation of friendly hospitality, with a very simple reason for the hospitality. In fact, there is music in the very word *abide.* (Note that the original has the same verb twice, while A. V. has "tarry" the second time. R. V. has "abide" both times.) Hence they have always appealed to poetic minds, and we are not surprised to find these two disciples' words reechoed in many hymns of the Church. See, *e. g.,* Hymn 110, stanza 1; No. 42, st. 3 (Keble's masterly prayer-song at evening); No. 9 (Crull's excellent translation of J. Stegmann's soulful hymn [1628], suited to the marvelous melody [1609] of Melchior Vulpius, originally written for *Christus, der ist mein Leben;* English No. 529 in our English hymnal). See also Bishop C. Wordsworth's fine hymn "The Day is Gently Sinking to a Close" (1863), No. 461 in the *Common Service Book.*

However, the greatest hymn ever written on the invitation of the Emmaus disciples is that of Henry Francis Lyte (1793—1847), the greatest hymn-writer of the second period of English hymnology, usually reckoned from 1780 to 1850 (the same period to which Heber belongs).

Both text and hymn invite us to say and pray daily: —

"O Thou, who Changest Not, Abide with Me!"

1. *Thou ever faithful Friend of sinners;*
2. *Thou triumphant Conqueror of death, our foe.*

1.

In order fully to appreciate the hymns of H. F. Lyte, we must know something of his life; for most of his hymns are the outgrowth of his personal religious experiences. It is true that these personal experiences are very delicately expressed and very carefully veiled, so that we might never imagine the secret of certain personal allusions in his hymns. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792—1822) declared of poets: "They learn in suffering what they teach in song." And in Lyte's case this is abundantly verified. Early in life he lost his parents. He had to struggle with poverty to get an education. His affections were betrayed or at least disappointed, the young lady whom he loved rejecting him. His ambitions were not realized. His health failed at a comparatively early age, his frail physique being attacked by tuberculosis. He experienced in his ministry much trouble and sorrow from unsympathetic and unappreciative parishioners and bore in addition many other severe crosses. With these personal experiences of Lyte's in mind, read his noble hymn "Jesus, I My Cross have Taken," written in 1824, 23 years previous to "our" hymn. (See No. 335.) Such lines as "Perish every fond ambition, All I've sought or hoped or known," or, "Let human hearts and looks deceive me," or, "Man may trouble and distress me," "Life with trials hard may press me," are all the outgrowth of personal experiences. How many souls with such and similar experiences has that hymn comforted and strengthened and revived with the hope that maketh not ashamed! Rom. 5, 3—5.

Ten years after writing that hymn of complete self-surrender to Jesus (No. 335), Lyte published *The Spirit of the Psalms,* a volume of versions of the Biblical psalms. From this collection our hymnal gives two "versions," *viz.,* "God of Mercy, God of Grace," a paraphrase of Ps. 67 (a hymn on Repentance by John Tyler, written 1795, has the same first line. No. 314 in *Common Service Book*) and "My Spirit on Thy Care, Blest Savior, I Recline," Ps. 31. See Nos. 71 and 369. His version of Psalm 42 certainly surpasses all others in the collection. It begins: "As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams," No. 257 in the *Common Service Book,* which also give Lyte's version of Ps. 84, "Pleasant Are Thy Courts Above," and of Ps. 14, 7; 53, 6, "Oh, that the Lord's Salvation Were out of Zion Come," a petition for the redemption of God's ancient people, one of very few in all hymnody. See *Common Service Book,* Nos. 422 and 229. The latter is chiliastic. No. 289 in the same book is also by him. (Make selection here to suit your purpose, *viz.,* to show the secret of Lyte's greatness in hymnody: in addition to deep personal experiences his mind was saturated with divine truth, with the thoughts and words of Holy Scripture; for the psalms are all given a New Testament interpretation.)

The last hymn, Lyte wrote was the hymn we are studying at present; it was written in 1847, the year of his death. In his poem entitled *Declining Days* we have these lines: —

> O Thou whose touch can lend
> Life to the dead, Thy quickening grace supply
> And grant me, swanlike, my last breath to spend
> In song that may not die.

As long as the earth remains, that song of resigned and submissive pleading will not die; for in language unsurpassable it makes us say what every soul needs to say to Jesus again and again. The hymn reveals to us how well its author knew Jesus, the Friend of sinners, the ever faithful Help of the helpless, when other helpers fail and comforts flee. Refer to his experiences and cite the first stanza. Note personal allusions and quote the second stanza. The "abiding presence," spoken of repeatedly in Jesus' farewell to His disciples, John 14—16, is beautifully described in the third stanza. Jesus was a familiar "Friend," John 15, 15, condescending, John 13, 2—15, washing His disciples' feet, patient (how very patient! See how patiently He answers their "foolish" questions, John 14); He was "free" with them, *i. e.*, liberal with His comforting promises of the Holy Spirit, John 16, 13, Himself laying down His life for them, 15, 13. In the fourth stanza we have a fine reference to Jesus as the King of kings, coming in terrors, which those will experience who reject Him, while the believer knows Jesus as "kind and good, with healing in His wings," Mal. 4, 2. Jesus, ever sympathetic (= "tears for all woes"), has "a heart for every plea" (prayer) of the repentant and believing sinner, Heb. 4, 15. 16; 5, 7—9; 1 John 2, 1. 2. — All this Jesus means and is to believing sinners. And He is the ever *faithful* Friend to them; though they may leave Him, become unfaithful to Him, Jesus' words stand: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," John 6, 37; Matt. 18, 21. 22. The words of the fifth stanza will be best understood in the light of 2 Tim. 2, 11—13: —

"If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him;
If we endure, we shall also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He, too, will deny us;
If we are faithless, He *abideth* faithful,
Since He cannot deny Himself." (Cp. Num. 23. 19.) *

"On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!" How perfectly natural this petition after what the poet has said in the preceding three lines! From that point onward he is looking forward to the swift ebbing out of life's little day. Note that, while the words of the two Emmaus disciples referred to the evening of that one day, Lyte, in his hymn, as well as all others employing the text, expand and extend their original meaning to *life's* day and night, Matt. 28, 20.

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* By the way, Dr. Louis F. Benson, perhaps the greatest authority in the United States to-day on hymnology, in his latest book *The Hymnody of the Christian Church,* 1927, is of the opinion that these words are most probably a quotation from a hymn, such as Eph. 5, 14 and 1 Tim. 3, 16. Cf. chap. 1. The parallelism is certainly strongly suggestive of a hymn or spiritual ode, Eph. 5, 18—20; Col. 3, 16. 17.

2.

Having portrayed Christ as the ever faithful Friend of sinners who trust in Him as their Help and Comfort, abiding faithful though we may be faithless, 2 Tim. 2, 13, the sacred singer now turns to another feature of the unchanging Christ's work for the believer, *viz.,* His work for the Christians in reference to their enemies. Having experienced in the past that the Lord is faithful, the poet is confident that Christ will abide the faithful Friend to the end, proving Himself "Death of death, our foe" (see Hymn 196, 1), the triumphant Conqueror of him that had the power of death, *i. e.,* the devil, Heb. 2, 14.

"On to the close," the poet says, he will need Jesus' presence "every passing hour" (st. 6). Why? Because of the Tempter's power, which he had also experienced. The power of the old evil Foe was ultimately responsible for that rebelliousness and perverseness, that departing from Jesus, to which he referred in the fifth stanza. There is but one thing that can "foil," render ineffectual, frustrate, Satan's power, and that is the "grace" of Christ Jesus, our Guide and Stay in temptation. From His grace, His love, nothing ought or should be able to separate us, Rom. 8, 35—39. If Jesus is at hand, at our side, to bless us, we fear, we need fear, *no* foe, not even the prince of this world, John 14, 30. The ills by which the Evil One would lead us to despair have no weight, the tears, the sorrows, we experience and which Satan would have us believe to be a sign of divine disfavor, have no bitterness for the faith which overcometh the world. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Why not? "For Thou," my Shepherd, my Guide, "art with me," Ps. 23, 4. Strong in the might of the triumphant Conqueror, who brought life and immortality to light, the soul exultantly shouts: "O death, where is thy sting? O death" (so original; not grave), "where is thy victory?" Death is *swallowed up in victory,* 1 Cor. 15, 54. 55; Is. 25, 8; Hos. 13, 14. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. 15, 26. Now we *see* not yet all things put under Him. Heb. 2, 8. But faith, being the evidence of things not seen, makes us triumph thus in Christ, Heb. 11, 1. God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 15, 57. (Stanza 7 of our hymn.)

We often think of our "last hour," especially when we pray the Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer. At the hour when our eyes close in death we want our parting look with those eyes to be on the cross of Christ; for when we are to go into death, there is but one thing that will pierce the gloom of death's valley, and that one thing is *His* cross. For, lest we forget, there is the sting of death. And what is that sting? SIN. (*To kentron;* of the sting of locusts, scorpions, Rev. 9, 10; of bees, 4 Macc. 14, 19.) And the strength, power, of sin is the Law, which knows but one sentence for the sinner: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. 18, 4. 20; 1 Cor. 15, 56; Rom. 6, 14; 7, 13. The cross is also to "point us to the skies." By His death upon the cross our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death and has brought life and immortality (incorruptibility, *aphtharsian*) to light, 2 Tim. 1, 10. Cf. Phil. 2, 8. 9: "because obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; *wherefore*," etc. Compare Gerhardt's similar prayer: *"Lass mich sehn dein Bilde in deiner Kreuzesnot!"* In our English version this is rendered: "Remind me of Thy Passion." (Note how much is lost in the translation of the original.)

"Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee" is reproduction of Song of Solomon 2, 17; 4, 6: "until the day break and the shadows flee away." The somewhat long hymn comes to a perfect rest, a finished close, with the words: "In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me," concluding with the same three words with which it commenced. (Its meter is iambic pentameter, and the hymn is sung according to Wm. H. Monk's tune "Eventide," written for the hymn fourteen years after it appeared. It is indeed an excellent spiritual song, a matchless piece of work.)

As already stated, Henry Francis Lyte was in poor health, yet he served his congregation at Brixham, on the eastern coast of Devonshire, England, for twenty-four years. He was advised to go to a warmer climate, to Italy. On September 5, 1847, against his doctor's advice, he held a final service with his little flock, preaching and celebrating with them the Lord's Supper. On the evening of that same day he wrote his immortal hymn "Abide with Me." (Brixham is only a few miles south of Torquay, where Charlotte Elliott wrote her "Just as I Am.") The next day Rev. Lyte started out on his journey to balmy Italy, but when he reached Nice, France, the frail and exhausted sufferer had to stop and rest. He had come to his journey's end. His last words were, "Peace! Joy!" He died on November 20, 1847, aged fifty-four. His remains are buried beneath a simple cross in the English cemetery at Nice.

"An effort is being made to rebuild the church at Lower Brixham as a memorial to Henry Francis Lyte." The present building, most unsightly and dilapidated, was erected early in the last century and is utterly unsuited for its present uses, "the pews being so narrow that it is, in the greater part of the church, inconvenient to sit, difficult to stand, and impossible to kneel." (Allan Sutherland, *Famous Hymns of the World.*)

How differently the hymn impresses us as we think on the invalid author's earthly days! When we consider that this song of his soul to his Lord and Savior has brought comfort and consolation to many thousands of helpless hearts, yea, has winged its flight round the world, being found in practically all English hymnals, the words of

Paul come to our marveling mind: "God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," 1 Cor. 1, 27.

Let us take a final glimpse at the unknown Traveler and the two disciples drawing nigh to Emmaus. He began to take leave of them (no unreal acting on the part of Jesus is implied; cp. Mark 6, 48; 7, 27) and would have gone on had they not prayed, entreated, Him to abide, remain, with them. A sincere request, a simple-hearted invitation. And He went in to abide with them.

Friend of Sinners, "descend to us, we pray, cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us to-day." Thou triumphant Conqueror over Death, our woe, and the old Evil Foe, O come to us, abide with us, in life, in death, our Lord Emmanuel! O. W. WISMAR.

O Bleeding Head and Wounded!

Matt. 27, 29—31.

Luther's "Mighty Fortress" is possibly the greatest Christian hymn ever written; for which hymn from Greek, Latin, German, or English sacred song could be mentioned that surpasses or even equals it in its triumphant faith and towering trust? (For a study on this hymn see CONCORDIA PULPIT, 1930, p. 329 ff.) Our English hymnal has included 27 of Luther's hymns. Next to Luther the greatest of all German hymn-writers is Paul Gerhardt (1606—1676), who wrote 120 hymns, all told, of which our hymnal gives 18. But while our hymnal has but 18, no less than 84 of Gerhardt's 120 hymns have found their way into standard English hymn-books. (Reeves, *The Hymn as Literature,* p. 266.) — Imagine a single man writing sacred songs for Advent, Christmas, New Year, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, etc., which express *beautifully* and *adequately* the heart sentiments of individuals gathered in public worship all over the world, — which is exactly what Gerhardt has done, — and you have some conception of his place as a hymn-writer. (Howald's statement: *"Und lassen wir fuer Ostern meist andern Dichtern das Wort, so ertoent es zu Pfingsten 'Zeuch ein zu meinen Toren,'"* almost sounds as though he forgot that Gerhardt wrote the triumphant Easter hymn "Awake, My Heart, with Gladness." See his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur,* p. 294.) Hence we are not surprised to hear Robert Bridges (1844—1930), Poet Laureate of England and himself a hymn-writer, exclaim: "There is nothing like Paul Gerhardt!"

Of the three Lenten hymns given in our hymnal let us take the one most widely known, not only in Lutheran circles, but in all Christian communities which believe in Christ Crucified as their only Savior, the hymn beginning "O Bleeding Head and Wounded." Text and hymn bid us behold "the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as Isaiah saw Him in prophetic revelation centuries before the event, while we, centuries after the event, see the Silent Sufferer with eyes opened by the Spirit, who prompted Matthew minutely to describe the wounds inflicted upon the Savior's sacred head.

Looking upon the Face of Our Suffering Savior,

we are reminded —

1. *Of His dying love for us;*
2. *Of our boundless indebtedness to Him.*

1.

"And the people" — as distinguished from the rulers — "stood beholding," writes St. Luke significantly, chap. 23, 35. In spirit people have been standing at the cross ever since, beholding the Crucified, John 19, 37; Zech. 12, 10; Rev. 1, 7. Ever since Pilate spoke his "Behold the Man!" people have looked upon that strange King, crowned with thorns, blood oozing from His wounded head, His countenance pale from the night of agony in Gethsemane, His fair face spit upon by Jews and Gentiles in utter loathing and contempt (Matt. 26, 67, and our text), buffeted, smitten, by some with the palms of their hands, by others with the reed, mock symbol of His kingly claims, led out to Golgotha to be crucified. And the heartless mockery, begun in Caiaphas's palace and continued in Pilate's judgment-hall, is not silenced even in the shadow of the cross. In silent submission the Lamb of God bears it all, and when He opens His mouth, it is not to revile and revenge, but to pray for the heartless, haughty mob of mockers and murderers. Verily, this is love, Heaven's love, for the hopeless sinner, hopeless but for that dying love.

Beautiful, supremely beautiful, is that noble countenance, that sacred head, described by Gerhardt. If you do not sense this, try your own hand at describing the "visage once bright as morn," now pale with pale death's anguish.

In all ages men have tried to express the mystery of that death, the cruel consummation of a career but yesterday crowned with Heaven's glory. And those whose eyes have been opened by Heaven's light and love and life cannot but tell the story of Him who loved us and, dying, dying upon the cursed cross, gave Himself for us; they cannot but sing of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, Eph. 3, 19. And in all ages God has had those who were His, else were there no truth in His promises of a Church prevailing till *He* come again who built His Church upon a Rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, Matt. 16, 18; 1 Cor. 11, 26.

And so we are not shocked, but pleased to hear that the words of Gerhardt are but the free rendering of sentiments of deepest devotion from a heart which beat centuries before him to the rhythm of the love of Christ dying upon the cross, from the heart of Bernard of Clairvaux, fettered by clamping cloister-walls and many other self-imposed coils, but unfettered sufficiently to sing of the love of Christ, "the very thought of whom with sweetness fills the breast of those who find" in Him the Savior of mankind. (See Hymns 98 and 90, which also are from Bernard's sacred lyre.) Luther said of this abbot of the monastery of Clairvaux: "If there ever was a pious man, who feared God, it was St. Bernard, whom I hold in higher esteem than all other monks and priests in the world." (St. L. Ed., III, 1010.) This great hymn-writer of the Latin period was born near Dijon, France, 1090, and died at Clairvaux (120 miles southeast of Paris), in the valley of the Aube, 1153. Thus he lived some 500 years before Gerhardt. (We must be careful to distinguish him from Bernard of Cluny (or Morlaix), his contemporary, who is the author of the two beautiful hymns on "Heaven" in our hymnal, Nos. 556. 557, excerpts from his poem of 2,991 lines entitled *De Contemptu Mundi,* written in a most difficult meter.) God moves in a mysterious way also according to hymnology's testimony. Study the history of the hymns in our hymnal, read and reread the hymns themselves, and you will come to make some wonderful discoveries in what we call "the *one* holy, catholic Christian Church, the *community* of saints," with its one Lord, one faith, one hope, one Spirit, Eph. 4, 4—6. The errors, the lies, the exaggerations, the understatements, are *not* the work of the one Lord and the one Spirit, but of the enemy of men's souls, Matt. 13, 28; Acts 10, 43.

Returning to our particular hymn, we find that it proclaims the dying love of our Savior in Latin since the middle of the twelfth century; it grips the heart of Paul Gerhardt in the middle of the seventeenth century, who sings its message in German measures; his German song fascinates and draws the heart of English translators in the nineteenth century; and its message circles the world in Anglican poetry. (The best of the many English renderings undoubtedly is that of James Waddell Alexander, 1804—59, a Presbyterian. The translation in our hymnal is by J. Kelly, 1880. Both of these men endeavored to pass the German hymn-treasures on to the English-speaking world. See, *e. g.,* Nos. 87, 174, 501, 525, etc. The translation of Sir H. W. Baker, beginning "O Sacred Head, Surrounded," while following Gerhardt's meter, was made directly from the Latin, 1861.)

The history of this hymn is so interesting that we cannot refrain from giving just one or two more details, especially since so many of the writers on hymns misinform us. Gerhardt based his *free version* on the text as given in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Opera Omnia* (Paris, 1609; cols. 1655—56). His hymn, *i. e.,* No. 201 in our hymnal, is but one of seven sacred songs addressed by Bernard to seven members of Christ's body as it hung upon the cross. Hence the title: *Rhythmica Oratio ad Unum Quodlibet Membrorum Christi Patientis* (a rhythmical prayer addressed to any one of the members of Christ suffering and hanging on the cross). For brevity's sake the poem of 350 lines (50 lines devoted to each member) is usually called *Salve Mundi Salutare* from the opening words of the first line of the first poem addressed to the feet of the Savior. This first hymn has been included in our German hymn-book, No. 91, *Sei mir tausendmal gegruesset, der mich je und je geliebt,* Gerhardt's free version, who rendered all seven into German. We quote the opening words of each of Gerhardt's versions plus the member of Christ addressed: 1. *Sei mir tausendmal gegruesset* — feet. 2. *Gegruesset seist du, meine Kron'* — knees. 3. *Sei wohl gegruesset, guter Hirt* — hands. 4. *Ich gruesse dich, du froemmster Mann* — side. 5. *Gegruesset seist du, Gott, mein Heil* — breast. 6. *O Herz des Koenigs aller Welt* — heart. 7. *Salve, Caput Cruentatum* — face, head.*

Only a believer can speak to Jesus in the terms of Gerhardt's hymn. Quote stanzas 1—3. That is sacred language, addressed in loving devotion to the holy face of the Lord of life and death, who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. 2, 8. The "realism" is in keeping with Paul's method of "setting forth" Christ crucified, Gal. 3, 1. Point out also the "realism" in our text, Matt. 27, 29—31. The mockery was as painful to Jesus' heart as the violence was painful to His sacred head and face.

2.

Having beheld the dying love of our Savior as reflected in stanzas 1—3 of our hymn, we now proceed to learn from it of our boundless indebtedness to Him. Why did His sacred head, His noble countenance, suffer all the abuse and pain described in our text and in stanzas 1—3 of our hymn? Because "my transgression," the burden of my sins, was upon Him. Quote stanza 4. If that is true, dear friend, what a boundless indebtedness we owe Him! And yet, how few, when they behold Him, confess: "Wrath were my rightful lot"! A. G. Spangenberg, 1704—92, bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum*, himself a hymn-writer, when on the celebration of his jubilee he received many flattering testimonies, replied to them in humility with the words of this stanza. Blessed humility indeed! Imperishable vitality of hymn-words! — The cry of the penitent is continued in the fifth stanza. Receive me, own me Thine, unworthy though I have proved myself, even since I have enjoyed Thy favor, O Savior! John 6, 37. In the sixth stanza we have the most "realistic" scene in the hymn, a realism that may strike us a bit peculiar at first. Pledging fealty to His dying Lord, the penitent offers to embrace the Savior when death's fatal grasp severs His, the Savior's, soul and body. But when we look at Jesus' death *as believers,* we feel the solitude of His soul, His being forsaken by all His disciples, yea, even by God, we realize the lack of love He experienced from His own, and this realization prompts the language in the sixth stanza.

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* Of Gerhardt's free versions Nos. 1, 5, 6, and 7 have passed into English. Note, as can be seen from Gerhardt's opening words, that the seven songs are simply a series of *salves* and *aves*. Gerhardt's free translation of Bernard's seventh *salve* appeared as No. 156 in the Frankfort edition, 1656, of Crueger's *Praxis*, in ten stanzas of eight lines each, entitled "To the Suffering *Face* of Jesus Christ" (*Ad Faciem*).

In the seventh stanza we voice our joy in suffering with Jesus, *glorying* in tribulations, even in death for His name's sake. (The English translation here is rather free.) For the Scriptural thought see 2 Cor. 1, 5—7; Phil. 3, 10; Heb. 2, 9. 10; 1 Pet. 4, 13, etc. The boundless debt we owe Him is going into death with Him and for His cause, a debt gladly and willingly met. Then follows very naturally the giving of thanks and renewing of "faithfulness-pledges" in view of Jesus' boundless love to us. (In st. 6, l. 5, st. 8, l. 7, and st. 9, l. 5, we have in the English translation practically a repetition — only "sever" for "languish." See the German original in each case and notice the richness and marvelous variety in Gerhardt's language. This very feature makes "translating" such a difficult task.) — Thus in stanzas 4—8 we have the believer's tribute to his dying Lord — acknowledgment of his boundless indebtedness to His Savior, who gave him His dying *love.* If you have really "beheld" the Lamb of God, you will gladly acknowledge your boundless indebtedness to Jesus and say with another hymn-writer who knew Jesus by faith as "the Prince of Glory": —

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

See No. 204, 4. (The more one studies Watts's great hymn, the more one inclines to call it "easily the greatest hymn in English hymnody.") Compare also, to get Gerhardt's full meaning in stanzas 4—8: "Take myself, and I will be *Ever, only, all* for Thee." (No. 355.) Superbly said.

And now we must ask, How could Gerhardt sing thus of Jesus? Again the answer is: "He learned in suffering what he teaches in song." He, too, was a man acquainted with grief, trials, sorrows, and keen disappointments, all of which had the blessed result of driving him to His Savior's breast. The Thirty Years' War, with all its ravages and misery, privations and sufferings, the loss of three children through death, the loss of his position as a result of the political methods of the Elector of Brandenburg in religious matters, — Gerhardt was then at the Church of St. Nicholas in Berlin, — his wife's death just before he left Berlin for his new charge, his one remaining child sickly, at his last charge no appreciation or Christian sympathy, for seven years a sad and lonely life, — these are the experiences which made Paul Gerhardt the singer he was, and thousands upon thousands who since have needed comfort and consolation have found peace in his hymns. — In the church at Luebben, where he lies buried near the altar, there hangs a life-size portrait of the sacred singer, with the appropriate legend aptly characterizing his career (see Luke 22, 31): —

THEOLOGUS IN CRIBRO SATANAE VERSATUS.

As we look at that career, how those last two stanzas, sung so often, gain in solemn meaning! (Quote stanzas 9 and 10.) The very last line are Luther's words on the death of his daughter Magdalene. *Wer so stirbt, der stirbt wohl.* — In 1798, while C. F. Schwartz (1726—98) lay a-dying at Tanjore, India, 170 miles south by southwest of Madras, his Tamil pupils gathered round him and sang in *their own language* these last two stanzas, he himself joining till his breath failed him in death, says Lauxmann. (Compare stanza 10 with stanza 3 of Herberger's "Farewell! I Say with Gladness," especially the German text.)

Let us love Him who first loved us, 1 John 4, 10. 20. Let us be faithful to Him in life and death, giving our body and soul in loving service to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, Gal. 2, 20; Eph. 2, 4.

SPECIAL NOTES. — Strictly speaking, Gerhardt's "O Bleeding Head and Wounded" is not a translation, but a *free version* of Bernard's original. Witness, for instance the first stanza of the Latin: —

SALVE, CAPUT CRUENTATUM,
TOTUM SPINIS CORONATUM,
CONQUASSATUM, VULNERATUM,
ARUNDINE VERBERATUM,
FACIES SPUTIS ILLITA.

If you read Latin, by all means read the five great hymns ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux. Their beauty of form and composition, their tender and fervent tone, the "life" breathing forth in them, all remind us of his title *Doctor mellifluus devotusque,* a title he richly deserves. If you need spiritual stimulation, the life of Bernard of Clairvaux will supply it abundantly.

You will notice that the melody of Hans Leo Hassler (1601) is fifty-eight years earlier than Gerhardt's hymn (1659). But the date given in our hymn-book is incorrect. It should be 1656. So the melody is fifty-five years older than the hymn. The melody is one of the grandest in all the history of music. Recall Bach's admiration of it, for instance. But — and now don't get a shock — it first appeared in Hassler's *Lustgarten,* Nuernberg, 1601, set to a love-song, beginning *Mein G'muet ist mir verwirret.* In the *Harmoniae Sacrae* (Goerlitz, 1613) it is set to *Herzlich tut mich verlangen,* Christoph Knoll's (1563—1621) hymn, in our German book No. 406. — Then in the *Praxis* (1656) we have it set to Gerhardt's hymn "O Bleeding Head and Wounded." O. W. WISMAR.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

The Founding of the Christian Home.

Col. 3, 17.

The Christian home is one of the most important institutions on earth.

First, because of its salutary influence on parents, children, Church, State and the world at large. (Portray these influences.)

Secondly, because of its unique position in the life of the Christian. It is "the spot on earth supremely blest, a dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest" (Montgomery). It is like an oasis in the desert, providing rest and refreshment, inspiration and joy, amid the toils and tribulations of life. "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss of Paradise that hast survived the Fall" (Cowper).

But in our day genuine Christian homes are rare. Even among those who profess to be Christians, there are many who maintain homes that are devoid of all distinctively Christian characteristics. But worse; in our own congregations there is an alarming increase of domestic strife, irresponsible parents, rebellious children, divorces, and the like.

But if our homes lose their Christian atmosphere and fall victim to the pernicious spirit of the age, they will cease to be a source of blessing and will inflict permanent injuries on parents and children, disgrace the Church, multiply the problems of the State, and be a standing offense to the world at large.

Certain ominous symptoms are appearing in our own congregation. (Elaborate this point according to local conditions.) Hence this series of sermons on the Christian home.

Let us now begin our study of this important subject by hearing from the Word of God how a Christian home is to be founded.

"Do All in the Name of the Lord Jesus" — the Best Prescription for the Founding of a Happy Christian Home.

This prescription is to be followed —

1. *From early youth;*
2. *Especially during courtship and at the engagement;*
3. *On the wedding-day.*

1.

A) *Preparation for marriage* really begins in early youth, when physical development takes place and character, attitudes, and habits are formed. Many render themselves physically, mentally, and morally unfit for marriage through careless living. Scores of homes are made unhappy and eventually are wrecked as a result of sins committed long before the wedding-day.

B) In view of these appalling facts I exhort the young, who will be the founders of our future homes, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Cf. 1 Cor. 10, 31. Never engage in an act that cannot be performed in the holy name of your Savior. Lead Christian lives in every respect, but especially in matters pertaining to the Sixth Commandment. Eccl. 12, 1; 1 Tim. 5, 22b; Eph. 5, 3; Col. 3, 5; Ps. 51, 10. In the pure and consecrated lives of our young people we have the best guarantee of future happy Christian homes.

C) These truths must be stressed in view of the general decline of morals. Parents dare not shirk their duties in this respect. With love and patience they must instruct, guide, admonish, and correct their children. Bear in mind how much is at stake.

2.

A) The first definite step toward the founding of a home is taken in *courtship.* Many regard courtship as a trivial matter, a mere pastime. But it is a serious and important matter, for it leads to the choosing of a life companion. Our young people dare never lose sight of this. In their associations with one another they should make an earnest effort to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." It may seem to them that courtship is altogether incongruous with the high and holy name of their Savior. But it is not. St. Paul says: "*Whatsoever* ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This "whatsoever" includes every word and deed in the life of a Christian, also his social activities and his courtship. Bearing this in mind, our young people will not cultivate dangerous friendships nor engage in forbidden pleasures. Cf. Eccl. 11, 9.

B) The next step is the *engagement,* or betrothal. Here the greatest care should be exercised. For "who shall tell how many lives that might otherwise have been beautiful, exalted, and benign have been marred, and blurred, and mutilated, and degraded by an improper marriage" (W. M. Taylor). So many rush blindly into engagements with worthless or ill-suited persons, never pausing for a moment to consider the consequences or to breathe a prayer. The results are evident in thousands of shattered homes. But the sincere Christian will choose his mate "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Entering into an engagement in this spirit, he will be mindful of the solemn and lifelong obligations he is about to assume; he will secure his parents' counsel and consent; he will zealously avoid every unlawful and perilous union; he will choose a Christian; he will call upon God for guidance and blessing. Thus he will place his feet in the path that leads to true domestic happiness.

C) How many heartaches and domestic tragedies would be avoided if our young people in their courtship and engagements would do all in the name of the Lord Jesus! "If our youth would but more deeply ponder what it is to choose a partner, to be of one spirit and one flesh with them for the whole of their pilgrimage on earth, their choice would not be made in the false glare of the theater or the ball-room. 'Till death divide you' would ring perpetually in their souls. In the light of day they would choose, and by the light of God's Word they would try their partner, seek the advice of Christian friends, and not join hands until they were sure of the divine amen." (Tholuck.)

3.

A) The actual founding of the home takes place on the *wedding-day.* In making the arrangements for the wedding and on the wedding-day itself the motto should be, "All in the name of the Lord Jesus." First of all, the marriage ceremony should be performed with the Word of God and prayer. But this is not enough. Jesus should in reality be the most prominent Guest at the wedding. A thoroughly Christian atmosphere should prevail, and every worldly element should be excluded. Above all, both the groom and the bride should dedicate themselves and their homes to the Lord and begin their married life with the firm resolve: Josh. 24, 15.

B) How sinful, foolish, and reckless it is to follow the marriage service with boisterous festivities patterned after the carousals of the wicked! Can they be conducted in the name of Jesus? Can Jesus be present at such gatherings? Certainly not. And yet they are all too common in Christian congregations. Let us testify against these disastrous practises and set a good example. Question: Is it not possible that the Lord in certain cases temporarily withholds His blessing from the newly founded home because of sins committed on the wedding-day?

Conclusion. — This, then, is the best prescription for the founding of a happy Christian home. (Text.) Observe this from early youth, follow it conscientiously during your courtship and at your engagement and marriage, and you have laid a good foundation for your home, you have built upon a rock. Matt. 7, 24; Ps. 128.

E. J. Friedrich.

The Proper Relation Between Husband and Wife.

Eph. 5, 22—33.

Last Sunday we learned from the Word of God how a happy Christian home is to be founded. (Brief review.)

But the successful founding of a home does not assure its permanent prosperity and happiness. Having made their beginning in the name of Jesus, the founders of the home must also continue therein. This implies that they conduct their home-life in strict conformity with the Word of God.

The fundamental problem of the married estate is contained in the question, "What is the proper relation between husband and wife?" This problem is encountered on the very threshold of the new home. It must be solved. And unless it is solved speedily and in the light of Holy Scriptures, there will be a dwarfed and blighted home-life, bitter disappointment, endless grief, and at length perhaps even divorce. This is the rock on which most marriages founder. Hence your attention is now invited to —

The Proper Relation Between Husband and Wife.

In our text we find it —

1. *Illustrated and exalted by a comparison to the relationship between Christ and the Church;*
2. *Considered from the opposite viewpoint of the wife and the husband.*

1.

A) In portraying the ideal marriage relation, St. Paul likens it to the unique relationship existing between Christ and the Church. Thus the apostle provides husbands and wives with a perfect and inspiring pattern.

B) *The essence of the relationship between Christ and the Church is love.* 1) *"Christ loved the Church,"* v. 23. This was not a theoretical, empty-handed love, for "He gave Himself for it," v. 25; and that not merely in part or for a season, but completely and permanently. And why did He give Himself? That He might be the Savior of the Church, v. 23, and that the Church through Him might be sanctified and cleansed, v. 26. Having given Himself for the Church, the Church belongs to Him. Hence He "nourisheth and cherisheth [protects] it," v. 29. By the means of grace He continues to cleanse, sanctify, and adorn it in order that the Church, as His bride, may in due time be presented unto Him immaculate, holy, glorious, v. 27. 2 Cor. 11, 2; Cant. 4, 7; Eph. 1, 4. Such is the marvelous, self-sacrificing love of Jesus. His chief concern is not His own person, but the Church and its salvation. — 2) *The Church, in turn, loves Jesus,* 1 John 3, 19; not indeed with a perfect love, but with a sincere love that earnestly strives for perfection. "This is my shame, this grieveth me, That I love not sufficiently Him who my heart hath ravished." "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," Cant. 6, 3. Hymn 349, 2.

C) Nevertheless *"Christ is the Head* of the Church," v. 23, and *"the Church is subject* unto Christ," v. 24. Note that this subordination of the Church to Christ is the direct result of their mutual love. Without love this relationship would be impossible. — 1) *"Christ* is the Head," but by reason of His love and for the purpose of exercising it to the fullest extent. He does not rule the Church with the iron hand of the Law. There is no coercion, no tyranny; for in this kingdom the sole law is love, the sole government by means of the Gospel, and the sole aim the salvation of the sinner. (Kingdom of Grace.) — 2) "The *Church* is subject unto Christ," but in love. This is a voluntary, cheerful subjection, the adoring resignation of the regenerated soul, a willing and eager service, Ps. 40, 8; John 4, 34, a blessed privilege. The true believer glories in the fact that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. Cf. St. Paul, Rom. 15, 15 f., etc.

D) This beautiful relationship between Christ and the Church is chosen by the apostle as the best pattern for the relation between husband and wife. Thus the marriage relation is *highly exalted.* This is "the loftiest conception of that relation that has ever come from human pen and one than which no higher can be imagined." (*Ex. Gr. Test.*) It is "a great mystery," v. 32, a type of the relation between Christ and the Church.

2.

A) *The basis of the successful marriage is love,* v. 25. Where love is lacking, there can be no domestic happiness. How foolish therefore to marry for wealth, social advancement, mere expediency, or even sensual gratification! — Where husband and wife are united by faith in Christ, their love for each other will be refined, deepened, and sanctified, for it will consistently pattern after Jesus, the ideal Bridegroom.

B) Nevertheless *"the husband is the head of the wife,"* v. 23, and *the wives* are to *"be subject"* to their husbands, v. 24. There is to be a well-organized and sympathetic cooperation between husband and wife, the husband being "the head" and the wife "an help meet for him," Gen. 2, 18. This conception of the marriage relation is contrary to the popular idea of a team (*coniugium*). In this day of the emancipation of woman it is regarded as antiquated, barbarous, pernicious, and unworkable. Even in Christian homes it is often ignored or even discarded altogether. But remember: the subjection of the wife to the husband is commanded by God. He is the best organizer, after all, and He knows that every organization, in order to function properly, must have one head; also the family. Where this God-given rule and fundamental principle of organization is violated or discarded, there will always be confusion and sorrow.

1) *Considered from the viewpoint of the wife,* vv. 22—24. 33 b. Note that this statement concerning the headship of the husband is addressed to the wife and *not to the husband.* She is reminded a) that the husband is the head, v. 23; Gen. 2, 18; 3, 16; 1 Cor. 11, 3. 7. 8; b) that she must therefore submit herself to him, v. 22, and reverence

him, v. 33; cf. Col. 3, 18; 1 Tim. 2, 11; 1 Pet. 3, 1. 5 f.; c) that she is to be subject in everything, v. 24, that is, in everything pertaining to the marriage estate, but not in spiritual things, Gal. 3, 28; d) that this should be a free, willing, joyful subjection, patterned after the Church's subjection to Christ and prompted, not by law or the force of circumstances, but by unadulterated love, v. 24; e) that she serves the Lord by being subject to her husband, v. 22; cp. Eph. 6, 5. The wife's subjection to her husband is part of her Christian conduct.

2) *Considered from the viewpoint of the husband,* vv. 25—31. a) St. Paul stresses that the chief duty of the husband toward the wife is *love,* v. 25; Col. 3, 19. He is to love her "as himself," "as his own body," vv. 33. 28. This is a moral obligation, *opheilousin,* v. 28, and a natural, self-evident thing, v. 29. Ellicott: *"Kata phusin* as well as *kat' opheilen."* — b) The apostle, moreover, shows that the headship of the husband brings with it a greater *responsibility* and necessitates greater *sacrifices.* While the wife finds a pattern for her attitude toward her husband in the Church's attitude toward Christ, the husband is to pattern his attitude toward his wife after Christ's attitude toward the Church. Note the difference. This implies giving himself to and for his wife in the fullest sense of the words, v. 25; providing for her and protecting her, v. 29; advancing her interests with self-effacing devotion, vv. 26. 27; regarding her as his most precious treasure, his glory and his joy, v. 27; Cant. 7, 6; and, last, but not least, exercising his headship not as a despot, who compels obedience by the threats and penalties of the law, but as one who "draws with bands of love," Hos. 11, 4; John 12, 32; Cant. 1, 4.

Conclusion. — This, then, is the proper relation between husband and wife, as outlined in the Holy Scriptures. (Brief recapitulation.) Far from being antiquated, barbarous, pernicious, and unworkable, it is the only ideal marital relationship — beautiful, satisfying, inspiring, and practicable. Where this relationship is maintained, domestic bliss will not be wanting.

O happy house where man and wife are one
Through love of Thee, in spirit, heart, and mind;
Together joined by holy bands, which none,
Not death itself, can sever or unbind;
Where both on Thee unfailingly depend
In weal and woe, in good and evil days;
And hope with Thee eternity to spend
In sweet communion and eternal praise.

(*Phil. Spitta;* tr. from the German.)

E. J. FRIEDRICH.

The Proper Relation Between Parents and Children.

Eph. 6, 1—4.

Two weeks ago we learned from the Holy Scriptures how a Christian home is to be founded. Last Sunday we were instructed with regard to the relationship that must be fostered between husband and wife if the home-life is to thrive and its happiness to continue.

But one important factor in the building of domestic happiness has not yet been mentioned — the children. They will bring either additional joy or indescribable grief and misery. At present numerous bright and promising homes are being turned into houses of mourning by wayward and rebellious children. In our own congregations we are having distressing experiences. It cannot be denied that children are one of the greatest and most vexing problems of the home.

Many solutions are offered for this problem. (A few may be mentioned.) But the only real solution is given in our text. There St. Paul outlines —

The Proper Relation Between Parents and Children.

We dwell —

1. *On his instructions to the parents;*
2. *On his instructions to the children.*

1.

A) *"Ye fathers."* St. Paul addresses the fathers because they are the heads of the households. The mothers are to assist them in carrying out these instructions. — As a rule, the relationship existing between parents and children may be traced back to the early attitude of the parents. They create the home atmosphere. By precept and example they mold the character of the children. Frequently the selfish, uncompromising, reckless spirit of the children is due to mistakes or negligence on the part of the parents. "As the sapling was bent, so the tree has grown." But not always; for at times "more springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed."

B) What should the attitude of parents be toward their children? This may be learned from our heavenly Father's dealings with His children, 1 John 4, 8; Matt. 23, 9; John 16, 27; 1 John 3, 1. Parental love is an affection which resides in every normal parent's heart. But in the heart of the Christian this love is purified and lifted to a higher plane. Christian parents love their children not merely because they are flesh of their flesh, but also because they regard them as *precious gifts of God,* Ps. 127, 3—5. (Contrast this attitude with the attitude of those who for selfish reasons prefer to remain without children.) *Luther:* "Children are lovelier and more magnificent creations of God than the fruits of all our trees. In them we behold the omnipotence, wisdom, and art of God." (22, 148.)

C) Since he is addressing Christian parents, St. Paul seems to take for granted that they are making an effort to *"bring up"* their children in the fear of the Lord. They must be instructed, trained, led on, in the paths of righteousness by precept and example. Nothing is more important in the life of a child than a Christian home-training. (Elaborate and illustrate.) *Luther:* "The father is to be the bishop and pastor of his household." (3, 194.) One of the most alarming symptoms in the Church of to-day is the superficiality, or even total absence, of Christian training in the average Christian home. Question: What is the situation in our congregation?

D) But Christian parents, especially if they are earnest in the training of their children, often make a grave mistake. Against this the apostle warns: *"Provoke not your children to wrath."* By undue severity, whimsical commands, interference merely for the sake of asserting authority, unwarranted reproof, and constant faultfinding the child is angered and filled with resentment. Thus it becomes "indisposed to filial honor and obedience." Moreover, it may become "discouraged," broken in spirit, crushed, melancholy, listless, Col. 3, 21. Thus the well-intended efforts of the parents are frustrated, and the child suffers inestimable harm. *Bengel: "Fractus animus pestis iuventutis."*

E) But the apostle also shows how parents may avoid this mistake. He adds: *"But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* "Nurture," education and training; in the New Testament with especial reference to chastening. "Admonition," training by word, especially by word of reproof. Children must be compelled to honor and obey their parents and to conduct themselves as Christians. Frequently this necessitates chastening and reproof, Prov. 13, 24. But when parents are forced to punish and reprove their children, they should exercise great care and self-control. Instead of yielding to their passions, *they should follow the Lord's method of chastening and reproving,* Rev. 3, 19. (This is the force of the words "of the Lord.") In short, parental love and solicitude must be evident throughout. *Hofmann: "Des Herrn Erziehungsweise reizt nicht und wirkt nicht Zorn, sondern gewinnt. So soll auch die der Eltern sein."*

2.

A) The proper attitude of the children toward their parents is determined by the words *obey* and *honor.* (Develop according to Synodical Catechism, Qu. 44.) But the apostle charges the children to obey *"in the Lord."* The obedience and honor which they render to their parents should not be the products of coercion or fear, but the fruits of true filial love and devotion, which grow and ripen in their youthful hearts as a result of their faith in Christ. Jesus' example: Luke 2, 51; Phil. 2, 8.

B. *"This is right,"* v. 1. Children owe this to their parents according to the law of nature and according to the Fourth Commandment, v. 2. Moreover, consider what your parents have done for you. (Describe the toils, sacrifices, and anxieties of parenthood.) Surely your parents have a right to expect love, honor, and obedience from you, dear children.

C) But what is *the situation to-day?* On every hand, even in Christian congregations, we behold disobedient children, who despise and mock their parents and wilfully go their own ways. How many happy homes have been wrecked by wayward sons and daughters! How many fathers and mothers have died prematurely of a broken heart! Surely we are living in an age when the Fourth Commandment has fallen into contempt.

D) Hence it is necessary to stress the Fourth Commandment in public and in private. Let us emphasize with St. Paul that it is one of the foremost commandments, *a commandment of first rank,* v. 2. God promises especial blessings to all who keep it, v. 3, while unusual punishments are to be meted out to those who flagrantly transgress it, Prov. 30, 17. In fact, filial disobedience is classed as one of the heinous sins of heathendom, Rom. 1, 30, and as an outstanding vice of the last age, 2 Tim. 3, 2. Let us war against this vicious sin for the sake of our children, our homes, our country, our Church, and our God!

Conclusion. — This, then, is the proper relation between parents and children: they are to be united in the Lord by the bonds of true Christian love, the parents caring for the children in every way, but especially bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the children, on the other hand, obeying and honoring their parents. Where this relationship is maintained, there the home will be full of joy and sweet companionship. E. J. FRIEDRICH.

The Preservation of the Christian Home.

Ps. 128.

In the preceding sermons we discussed some of the fundamental principles of home-building and home preservation. But we have not yet exhausted the subject. Other essential requirements for permanent domestic happiness must still be stressed.

Let us now consider these requirements at the hand of this beautiful psalm. Here we have a description of a happy home which the Lord promises to preserve, a home conducted in such a way as to give the father the assurance: vv. 5. 6. We ask, —

How May a Happy Christian Home be Preserved?

By cultivating —

1. Christian home-life, *2. Christian home virtues,*
3. Christian home worship.

1.

A) Our text portrays *a happy family,* an ideal home-life. Husband and wife, parents and children, live together in a blissful relationship, vv. 2. 3. (A splendid opportunity for a word-picture.) Ps. 133.

B) Compare with this *the average home in our day.* The home is in many cases merely a place to eat and sleep. The members of the family are like scattered embers on the hearth. Little family spirit, ever-weakening family ties, no intimate and congenial family life, no common interests. There is an ever-widening gulf between parents and children, and the children drift apart from one another. In short, the home is disintegrating. A real tragedy, "for the hearthstone has ever been the corner-stone of the family and of society" (Bellows).

C) *Let us counteract this tendency* of our age with all the power at our command. Pattern your home-life after the ideal portrayed in this psalm. Let the members of the family really live together, work together, and play together. Let the parents make a systematic effort to make the home attractive for their children. Let them be the companions and sympathetic confidants of their maturing sons and daughters. Let the children, on the other hand, appreciate these efforts of their parents, cooperate with them, and make the home the center of all their activities. — These are the first steps to be taken if we would insure the continued happiness of our homes.

2.

A) But the psalmist says also: v. 1. *He makes the prosperity and happiness of the home dependent upon genuine piety,* demonstrated by "walking in His ways," Prov. 12, 7. Parents as well as children should therefore strive to lead godly lives. But, being members of a family, they should in particular guard against such sins as undermine the family-life and with determination cultivate home virtues.

B) *The most indispensable home virtues* are: 1) *love,* which includes unselfishness, courtesy, patience, etc.; cf. 1 Cor. 13, 4—7; 2) *moral purity,* for sins against the Sixth Commandment will disrupt a home faster than anything else; 3) *sobriety,* for drunkenness begets strife, poverty, suffering, and contempt; 4) *industry,* for without diligent labor the home will suffer want, v. 2; 5) a Christian attitude with regard to temporal possessions, avoiding, on the one hand, *avarice,* on the other, *wasteful extravagance;* for by both a family is at length deprived of the necessities of life. (Support these statements with Scripture-texts and use a few illustrations.)

C) Here we have *the principal reason for the disintegration of our homes and the rarity of true domestic happiness:* the decadence of domestic piety, resulting in the neglect of one or more indispensable home virtues. — Friend, let your own home-life pass in review before your soul. Can you, under existing conditions, expect the Lord to continue to bless you and your family?

3.

A) Christian home-life and home virtues cannot thrive without *regular home worship.* True, home worship is not expressly mentioned in our text, but the general tone of the psalm suggests it, and the statement v. 1 definitely includes it. If a father really fears the Lord and endeavors to walk in His ways, he will certainly gather his family every day about the family altar. Do you, my friend, maintain family worship in your home?

B) Consider the *benefits* of regular family worship. At the family altar the members of the family are daily brought together in intimate spiritual intercourse; there is a continual reaffirmation of their oneness; a constant deepening of the unity of spirit; a steady growth in love and sympathy. At the family altar the family as a body communes with God by hearing His Word and praying together, Matt. 18, 20. By the Word of God the members of the household are refreshed, comforted, strengthened, preserved, warned, guided, and defended, Ps. 119, 105. 165. 9; Col. 3, 16; Prov. 30, 5; Eph. 6, 11 ff. In prayer they pour out their hearts before God and invoke His benediction upon the family and its members. If there is an especial affliction, it is committed to the Father of mercies at the family altar. Thus everything that is noble and sublime in family life is fostered, strengthened, protected, and refined in family worship — unless the family worship is a cold, mechanical performance.

But where the family altar has been *abolished,* the most prominent feature of Christian home-life has been eliminated and the door opened wide to worldliness and spiritual degeneration. Can you, Christian father, continue to deprive your family of the blessings that accrue from regular domestic worship?

Conclusion. — Thus we have heard what we must do if we would preserve our homes in their happiness and spiritual prosperity. (Recapitulation.) May every one of us reduce to practise what he has learned from the Word of God! Josh. 24, 15. Then: Ps. 128, 5. 6.

O happy house where with the hands of prayer
   Parents commit their children to the Friend,
Who, with a more than mother's tender care,
   Will watch and keep them safely to the end;
Where they are taught to sit at Jesus' feet
   And listen to the words of life and truth
And learn to lisp His praise in accents sweet
   From early childhood to advancing youth.

E. J. Friedrich.

The Christian Home an Image of Our Eternal Home in Heaven.

John 14, 2.

In the course of the past month we have studied a subject of paramount importance — the Christian home. We have learned from the Word of God how a Christian home is to be founded, what the proper relation is between husband and wife and between parents and children, and finally how the happiness and the prosperity of the Christian home may be preserved. Much food for serious thought. Incentive to self-examination and self-improvement.

But the Lord in His goodness did not merely give us commandments, directions, and specifications for building and maintaining Christian homes. He also provided us with *a perfect model* from which we poor disheartened mortals should draw inspiration and after which we should pattern our own homes —

My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul.

Yes, "home" is the dearest name for heaven. The dying believer says: "I am going home." Jesus Himself refers to heaven as His "Father's house." We ourselves sing: Hymn 558.

Yes, heaven is the ideal, the perfect home. There we have a Father without shortcomings and a family that has attained to perfection. Nothing mars the beauty and harmony of their ineffable communion. Well may we try to model our modest little homes after this "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. 5, 1. We consider —

The Christian Home an Image of Our Eternal Home in Heaven.

1. As a haven of rest; *2. As a habitation of peace;*
3. As a treasury of joy.

1.

A) *Heaven is a haven of rest* for the weary toiler, whose life abounds in labor and sorrow, Ps. 90, 10. Physical, mental, spiritual toils; the last-named are the most distressing. When the cross begins to crush us down into the dust and we feel our strength ebbing away, we are buoyed up by the conviction that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God," Heb. 4, 9; Rev. 14, 13. We sigh: —

I would go home! Fain to my Father's house,
Fain to my Father's heart!
Far from the world's uproar and hollow vows,
To peaceful rest, apart.

Yes, we long for heaven, for the haven of rest. Hymn 564, 1; 566, 1. 2.

B) *The Christian home should be an image of heaven in this respect.* It should be a quiet retreat, where the members of the family may rest from their labors and gather strength for the morrow. The restfulness of the eternal home should be reflected in our homes.— But, alas! in the average home there is such a turmoil, such a hustle and bustle, as makes all rest, mental and spiritual relaxation and refreshment, all meditation and thoroughgoing introspection, impossible. The home atmosphere is enervating rather than healthful and invigorating. And the home itself is anything but a haven of rest. What a pity! — Let us make a consecrated effort to pattern our earthly homes after the blessed haven of rest in heaven. "May they be as green spots in the desert to which we can retire when weary of the cares and perplexities of life and drink the clear waters of a love which we know to be sincere and always unfailing." (*Saturday Evening Post.*) Then they will be real homes and not mere dwelling-places.

2.

A) *Heaven is also a habitation of peace.* When the good soldier of Jesus Christ is in the thick of the battle, "tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without"; when he seeks peace, but can find none, on the contrary, passing from agony to agony, then he looks out over the dust and smoke of the battle and strains his eye toward his Father's house, within whose walls peace dwells forevermore. There all conflicts will cease, Rev. 21, 4, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will be his permanent possession, Is. 57, 2; Ps. 4, 8. Oh, how the believer yearns for the peace of heaven! He prays: Hymn 16, 4.

B) *The Christian home should be an image of heaven also in this respect.* It should be pervaded by the peaceful atmosphere of heaven. The contentious, fretful spirit of the world should be excluded. Strife, bitter disputations, malice, hostility, and everything that mars domestic peace must be carefully avoided. And remember: Jas. 3, 5 ff.; cf. Eph. 4, 31 f.; Col. 3, 8; Gal. 5, 20; 2 Cor. 13, 11; Matt. 5, 9. "At home the hateful names of factions cease." (Dryden.) The Christian home should be like a city of refuge, a pavilion in the day of trouble, a stronghold where the agitated spirit may find that peace which the world knoweth not. — Is your home a habitation of peace? Can the members of your household, safely at home after the day's toils and dangers, join in the words of Hood: —

> Peace and rest at length have come
> All the day's long toil is past,
> And each heart is whispering, "Home!
> Home at last!"?

3.

A) *"Heaven is the treasury of eternal joy."* (Shakespeare.) It is the storehouse in which our heavenly Father is preserving for us "the joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. 1, 8, earned for us by Jesus and given us in the Gospel. The joys of heaven are *perfect* and *everlasting,* Ps. 16, 11; 1 Pet. 4, 13; 1 Cor. 2, 9; Jude 24. They far outweigh our afflictions, Rom. 8, 18. Prominent among the joys of heaven will be our blissful *communion with God and the saints,* John 17, 24; 1 Cor. 13, 12; 1 Thess. 4, 17; Matt. 8, 11. What a happy day that will be when we shall stand in the presence of the Father, reunited forever with the loved ones who have preceded us! Small wonder that the sorrow-stricken heart longs for the heavenly home, for there its sorrow shall be turned into joy; John 16, 20.

B) *The Christian home is to be an image of heaven also in this respect.* It is to be the treasure-house of earthly joys and delights. "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss of Paradise that hast survived the Fall." (Cowper.) All our pleasures should be rooted and grounded at home. And the home should be so designed and so conducted that it will satisfy the legitimate cravings for enjoyment in the breasts of its individual members. The purest delights of home-life are found in the cordial associations of parents and children. These delights create that "home, sweet home" of which we sing: "Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." — Friend, is your home a treasury of joy for you, for your wife, for your children? Or is it a bleak house, devoid of happiness? O imitate your heavenly Father before it is too late and endow your home with joy. In years to come your children will bless you for it.

Conclusion. — Our homes should be images of the Father's house in heaven. (Recapitulation.) But are they? Surely it is time to remodel our home-life according to higher ideals. Let us not postpone this, but begin to-day. The best beginning is the immediate introduction of regular family-worship. God bless our humble efforts! God bless our homes!

E. J. FRIEDRICH.

SPECIAL SERVICES.

Outline for a Funeral Sermon.

Ps. 71, 19—23.

The death of ——, whose mortal remains lie in the coffin before us, has caused much sorrow and weeping among children, grandchildren, and other relatives. Death is always sad. It means parting from loved ones for the duration of this life. Close-knit bonds are separated. Home broken up, family separated. Natural to grieve.

Still I am sure that every one believes it a blessing of God that she was taken away. Her life full of suffering. Bedfast many years. And when death entered her home several years ago, instead of relieving her suffering, it took her husband.

It was a heavy cross that she bore. No wonder sometimes near despair; but she was always kept in faith by the Word of God. Frequently some one complaining of suffering would say: "But I ought not to complain; there are others suffering more"; and her name was mentioned.

When we consider her life and death, we have reason to thank God. Our thoughts are expressed in this text.

We Praise God's Righteousness and Goodness.

V. 19. God's ways are different from our ways. His justice is higher, beyond the plane of our understanding, Is. 55, 8. 9. We often would arrange differently. Sometimes God's arrangements seem unjust. But God orders our lives according to a justice that is too high to be understood by us. There is no accident or blind fate. God rules all, Acts 17, 28. God's dispensations are always right and just. Therefore, as we consider the life of our departed sister, we do not accuse God of any injustice, but we praise His righteousness, because it is "very high" and beyond our understanding. (Hymn 494, 1; 498, 1; 507.)

Further, as we view her life and her death, we are moved to praise God's goodness and grace. The Bible speaks much of the goodness of God, Ps. 23; Ex. 34, 6. 7; Ps. 91, 10; 37, 5; 103, 13.

May we speak of the goodness of God here, when we know of the great cross and trial that our sister bore for half a century? V. 20 teaches us to praise the goodness of God. The Lord sent her great trouble. Many prayers were sent to heaven for relief. God gave great strength to bear the cross and much comfort in sorrow. And above all, God held in reserve for her a great and wonderful gift, her soul's salvation, her happiness in heaven. God has prepared this gift through Christ, our Savior, for all people, and He grants to all who believe forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; also the assurance that our bodies will rise again after they have lain in the grave.

But God sometimes deals with His children as a mother deals with her child. The mother may have a birthday present carefully laid aside, ready for the child. If the child comes to the mother before the birthday and asks for something, the mother may say: "Wait a bit, my child; you are to receive a beautiful present in a short time." So God sometimes lets a Christian wait when he asks for something in this life because He is ready to give him a wonderful gift in eternity. Can we not apply this thought in this case? Then we can praise God's goodness; for we are assured that He kept for her the gift of salvation, since she believed in her Savior. Our thought is expressed in Hymn 499, 5.

Let us praise God's righteousness and goodness and pray Him that He would lead us in such ways as will bring us to everlasting life.

FREDERIC NIEDNER.

Outline for Wedding Address.

Ps. 37, 5.

The words of our text are words of advice and promise meant for all Christians, and you may very well give earnest heed to them on this your wedding-day. — But do you need any advice or promises to-day? Many young people want no advice for their actions, least of all on the subject of matrimony. They feel perfectly competent to do their own thinking. I am sure you will heed this advice, because it comes from the Word of God. — But what need have you of a promise? Do you not have everything in your love for each other? The world seems bright, your life is filled with happiness. However, I know that God's promises are welcome to you, for you understand how much you need them.

This is the advice: "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Your way, your life, lies before you, a road that you must travel. Thus far each of you alone; now hand in hand. Will you always be on the right road? If you come to a turning-point in life, will you stay on the path of safety? Here is God's advice and promise: text. Turn your way and your path over to God. Let God choose for you. Follow God's guidance. Let the Bible be your guide, Ps. 119, 105. If you will follow the Word of God as you take every step in your life, you will be on the right path. God promises that He will guide you well.

What will you encounter on the path that you are traveling together? To-day every one is expressing to you his wish that your life may be happy and filled with sunshine and joy. But we know well enough that we cannot keep sorrow out of our lives. How can you be assured that you will prosper, that you may build your home in peace, that your love will continue, that happiness will endure? And if sorrow enters your life, if disappointment throws a dark shadow on your path, how will you be able to bear up under the cross and keep your hearts content? Here again you have God's advice and promise. Leave it all to your God. Turn it all over to Him. Trust in God. Happiness and joy are His gifts, and He will give them to you in such a measure as will be good for you. And crosses and trials also come from God, and He gives them in such a measure as His Christians can endure. And He is your Helper in every need. Commit your way to your God, trust in Him, and He will give you the happiness that shall be yours, and He will protect you in the sorrows that assail you. Commit it all to God in prayer. Lead a life of prayer in your home. God hears prayer and fulfils the desires of our hearts. "What a Friend we have in Jesus," etc. (Hymn 395.)

And can you be sure that the path you are following will lead to eternal life? On earth you can be together for a few years. A parting must come. Will your road lead you to heaven? Here again we have God's advice and promise. Commit this to God. He has prepared for us a sure way to eternal life through Christ, our Savior, and He promises that all who believe shall have eternal life.

Surely as you set out to-day on the path of life together, no better advice and no better promise can be given you than those contained in our text. Some people sneer at married life and declare that no lasting happiness is to be found in it. But for those who follow God's advice and believe His promises there is the assurance that their path is right, their happiness secure, and their goal assured.

Frederic Niedner.

Introductory Sermon.

Eph. 6, 18. 19.

When through the preaching of the everlasting Gospel the yoke of papal tyranny had been lifted from the shoulders of millions of believers, Christian congregations were again free to exercise their God-given right of calling pastors to their pulpits. Realizing how much was involved, they asked the Lord in fervent prayer for guidance in a matter vital to the welfare of the congregation. The liturgies of the Reformation era were supplied with a general prayer, embodying the special petition that the Lord would grant unto His Church faithful pastors, who would preach the Word with power. Several of the early hymn-books of our Church have short prayers asking God's blessing for the man in the pulpit and in the pew.

Even so to-day a congregation will consider the calling of a pastor a serious matter. It will take stock of the peculiar needs of the members and the missionary possibilities of the community. It will also appreciate the counsel of the officials of Synod. Above all else, however, they will take this matter to the Lord in prayer, believing in the promise recorded Jer. 3, 15.

Nor will a faithful pastor who has been duly called, treat this matter lightly, but will give it his prayerful attention and discuss the call with his fellow-pastors. In every way he will try to see clearly the will of God.

Having come to the conclusion that it is clearly God's will that I accept your call, I stand before you this morning, praying the Lord to bless my efforts in behalf of a successful pastorate. If my labors among you are to bear fruit, I must have your cooperation. Therefore I plead with you, as did St. Paul with the congregation at Ephesus, to sustain my work by your prayers.

On the basis of our text and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit I would this morning dwell on

Prayer a Vital Factor in Striving for a Successful Pastorate.

This is to be borne in mind

1. By the pastor, *2. By the congregation.*

1.

St. Paul about whose success as a pastor and missionary there is no doubt, stresses prayer as a vital factor in the work of the Church. In the words of our text we hear him plead with the Ephesians to support his missionary endeavors by fervent prayer. What St. Paul asks of his believers, namely, to pray for the success of the Gospel, he himself did. His urgent plea presupposes that he himself was instant in prayer.

Though not an eye-witness of the mighty words and works of Jesus, it was well known to him that prayer was a vital part of the Lord's ministry. Jesus stood in daily communion with His heavenly Father regarding the great work He had undertaken, the salvation of men's souls. He prayed for His disciples, collectively and individually. He prayed for the Church, John 17, 20. Since Jesus, the chief Shepherd, considered it of vital importance to pray for the welfare of the Church, it is evident that all who serve in the Church as pastors are to follow His example. Already in the ordinary affairs of life it behooves a Christian to ask God's blessing, Ps. 127, 1. How much more so where the welfare of immortal souls is to be considered! St. Paul assures his congregations of his prayers in their behalf, Phil. 1, 3. 4; Col. 1, 3. Being filled with a passion for souls and knowing that the prayer of the righteous availeth much, he begs the Ephesians to pray for him that he may open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel. 1 Cor. 2, 6—10 explains the meaning of "mystery." Every man has some knowledge of the Law, Rom. 1, 19; 2, 14. 15. But the wonderful story of God's love as revealed in the words John 3, 16 is absolute news to man. To make this story known among men, St. Paul asks the prayers of the Ephesians. Nor did he confine his plea to the Ephesians, Col. 2, 2—4.

As we study our text, we find another instance which proves to us how the great apostle was fully aware of the importance of prayer in the work of the Church. When he penned the words of our text, he was near the end of his missionary career. He had been eminently successful.

But he remained humble in view of his great success. He gives all glory to God. And he begs the Ephesians to continue their prayers for him.

Dear members of —— congregation, it has pleased the Holy Ghost to picture to us in detail the life of this great apostle that faithful pastors may emulate his example. A pastor who is remiss in prayer cannot expect to be successful in an undertaking in which we are absolutely dependent upon God's help and blessing. A pastor's work must be done on bended knees. This was Luther's axiom. He, too, considered prayer of vital importance in church-work. What presumption, then, if I were to believe that I could dispense with prayer! May God grant me His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and prayer, that I may ever bear in mind that prayer is of vital importance in striving for a successful pastorate.

2.

This is to be borne in mind by the congregation also. St. Paul stresses this point in particular. A careful study of our text leads us to understand why he urges the Ephesians to pray for him with all perseverance. He asks their prayers that he may open his mouth "boldly." There was much to keep the apostle from proclaiming the Gospel of Christ fearlessly. He had to reckon with the hostile attitude of Jews and Gentiles. The Jews in particular sought to destroy him. In 2 Cor. 11 we have a catalog of hardships endured by the apostle because of his preaching the Gospel of Christ. He had to contend with the destructive forces of false prophets. It grieved him when Demas turned his back to the work of the Church. It was sad news for him to hear of the divisions in the congregation at Corinth. Verily, he had reason to say: "We are troubled." But he adds: "We are not distressed." He found solace in prayer. And he exhorts his fellow-Christians to pray for the success of the Gospel. If the prayer of one man availeth much, surely the combined prayers of the believers must be a most powerful factor to achieve blessed results. Of the congregation in Jerusalem we read: Acts 2, 42. They prayed for the success of the Gospel by praying for the apostles.

Dear friends and members of —— congregation, if my pastorate is to be successful, — and I know that such is your sincere desire, — I must have the support of your prayers. I plead with you to pray for me that I may open my mouth boldly to preach the old Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Though living in times of outward security, it nevertheless takes courage boldly to preach that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Cultured Greece mocked Paul because of his Gospel-message. Even so to-day do the worldly-wise ridicule the Gospel of Christ. In spite of what the Bible says to the contrary, they insist that man is inherently good. Let us not close our eyes to the fact that great is the temptation in our days to make concessions to human wisdom and philosophy. The pride of human learning was never greater than to-day. In the churches there are many who think it smart and up to date to deny or discredit much of the faith. It requires no little courage to stand up boldly against all the pretensions of a destructive higher criticism. It takes courage in the endeavor to stem the rising tide of worldliness that threatens to engulf the churches. False prophets in large numbers are seeking to draw to themselves the very elect of God. In view of the seriousness of the times you will readily understand why I am constrained to plead with you to pray for me.

And by way of comparison I dare say that I feel that I stand far more in need of your fervent prayers than did St. Paul of the prayers of the Christians to whom he wrote. He was a man of rare endowments. Yet he considered it vital for the success of his ministry that the Christians pray for him. I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions. A congregation that will support the work of the pastor by fervent prayer is not likely to be inclined to judge him uncharitably when it discovers that he is by no means a saint. It will bear with him as it expects him to bear with them.

A praying congregation will be fruitful in all good works. Though it may be small in numbers, it will be a strong congregation when it bears in mind that prayer is a vital factor in striving for a successful pastorate. Where pastor and people bow their knees in fervent prayer for one another, souls will be won for Christ and will be kept with Christ. And if it should happen that in spite of our prayers but little success is visible, let us not get discouraged, but take comfort in the promise of Is. 40, 29—31. And oh, the joy that shall be ours on the Last Day, when we shall see that our prayers have not been in vain! Therefore: Eph. 6, 18. 19. BRUNO POCH.

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Ordination.

Phil. 2, 29.

The words of our text originally refer to Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus, it seems, was at that time the pastor of the church at Philippi. St. Paul evidently held him in high esteem. He speaks of him as his "brother," as his "companion in labors," as his "fellow-soldier," and says that he had "ministered to his wants." He tells the congregation at Philippi also of his sickness since he had left them and had been with him at Rome and informs them that his sickness had been induced by exposure and excessive devotion to the work of the ministry and that in his separation from them, his flock, he had frequently thought of them and eagerly longed to see them again. In brief, a very noble, loving, faithful minister of the Gospel was this Epaphroditus; a man in every way deserving of being, as the text exhorts, "held in reputation," that is, in esteem, honor, appreciation, especially by those who constituted his spiritual flock. And since all Scripture has been written for our learning and application, so also this exhortation of the apostle addresses itself to our present-day churches as directly and sacredly as to the church at Philippi then. Every faithful minister of Christ, in these latter days as well as in those early days of Christianity, is worthy of being held by the Church and by all men "in reputation," especially by his own congregation. On this solemn and joyous occasion we would mention three reasons why those who minister in divine things should be held in reputation and give expression to three sentiments which ought to permeate their bosom when looking back in holy memory upon twenty-five years of service in the Church of Christ.

1.

a) God's Word teaches that ministers should be held in reputation *for the sake of their office.* The office of the Christian minister is the loftiest, the most important, and the most solemn calling ever assigned to man. The reason for this is very plain. The ministerial office deals with men's *souls,* and the soul is the most important part of man. None other than the Lord Jesus Himself established the holy ministry. He called the chosen Twelve; by a voice from heaven He summoned the writer of our text, St. Paul, to the apostleship. He gave these His apostles the Great Commission to go into all the world and teach all nations whatsoever He had commanded them. Even so it is He who still perpetuates the office of the ministry. By the Holy Ghost and the voice of the Church He calls men into it and invests them with His authority, empowers them to speak and administer and rule in His stead. "He that heareth you heareth Me," etc. There is no other office, no other position of earthly honor and dignity, in God's sight and in the sight of His people which approaches that of the Gospel ministry. The humblest incumbent of the sacred office in the obscurest part of our land who preaches the divine Word and administers the Sacraments is the accredited servant of the most high God, the ambassador, as St. Paul terms him, of the exalted Christ. No more lofty trust could be conferred upon any human being than to be ordained into this office.

'Tis not a work of small import
  A pastor's care demands,
But what might fill an angel's heart
  And filled the Savior's hands.

And verily, when God Himself, by the ordaining power of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the divinely formed and imperishable Church, has honored any man, imperfect though he be, in putting him into this high and holy office, when He has counted him worthy of such exalted trust, ought not God's people to honor him, for the sake of his office reverence him, hold him in reputation?

b) *For their work's sake.* Low, derogatory views some have concerning the ministerial office. There are those who judge the life of a minister as a sphere of dignified leisure, as a profession wherein, with the exception of the discharge of a few easy duties and a little studious retirement, life is idly and selfishly passed. As a matter of fact and in truth there is no calling which entails more toil of body and toil of mind and toil of spirit. Reflect for a moment what some of a minister's labors are. There is the preparation each week of two, often even more, public discourses, for all of which careful and sustained thought is needed, which require time and concentration more than most of our hearers are aware of. Then there are the pastoral visits of his flock (and how inconsiderate and heartless is the exaction made upon him by some in this respect!); the special visits of the sick and shut-ins, who regularly expect his calls; the burial of the dead; the general oversight and direction of affairs as it finds expression in the many meetings of the various organizations; the catechization of the young, regularly conducted for months; the looking up and instructing of adults. These are constant duties, duties a pastor has to perform as he daily goes in and out among his people. Then, too, there are outside duties. A church has synodical connection. This calls for service on the part of the pastor. Then there is charitable work and outside educational work. These often make exhaustive demands on his time and strength. And even more exacting are the burdens of the *soul.* As the Germans so expressively designate their pastor, he is a *Seelsorger,* that is, one who is concerned about, cares for, the soul of those whom God has committed to him in trust. In order to be that, he must first be a *Seeltraeger,* that is, a soul-carrier; he must carry them in love in his own soul. Just as in the Old Testament the high priest bore upon his breastplate the names of the tribes of Israel, so the conscientious and faithful pastor bears upon his soul the souls of his flock. He daily prays for them, sometimes mentioning their names before the Throne of Grace. What sorrow of heart is his as he beholds some under his ministry who reject the message he proclaims! What grief as he witnesses the indifference and worldliness of many! What distress and anguish as he sees those of whom he had confidently expected something better and whose loyalty had been his delight lapsing, falling away, criticizing and opposing! Who has deep sorrow, and he sorrows not with them? personal, family, business afflictions and reverses, and he feels not for them? In all things he and his people are fused together into a spiritual unity. But what a draft, incessant and exhausting tax, upon a pastor's sympathies, his vital and nervous energies, his very life-blood, such experiences impose! They eat away, as it were, the marrow of his soul.

c) *For their character's sake.* God has entrusted the high office of the ministry not to angels, but to men, and not to perfect men, but to men who are very imperfect, to men of like infirmities with those to whom they minister, to men with weaknesses and faults and besetting sins, men who like those to whom they preach are saved by the unmerited grace of God. And yet, every true minister of Christ, while imperfect, is still a regenerated man, a man anointed by the new spiritual life wrought within him by the Holy Ghost, a man the eyes of whose soul have been opened to things unseen and whose heart has come under the mighty sway and moral power of the world invisible and unseen. An unspiritual and unconsecrated man in the ministry, by the verdict of God's Word and the conscience of the Church, is unfit for the sacred calling he has assumed, a poor apology for a servant of the Savior. But a renewed, consecrated man in the ministry, though encompassed with infirmities and frailties, who has exhibited a devout and Christian disposition and has gone in and out among his people without any grave offense to darken the good name of an honorable and useful life, is worthy of reverent love and devotion.

2.

The sentiments which, as a minister of the Gospel glances back over a prolonged period of ministerial usefulness, ought to permeate the bosom of the celebrant shall now be mentioned.

a) *Grateful joy.* That God in His kind providence should ever have chosen any human being for the office of the ministry is an act of unmerited favor. If our great predecessor in office, divinely endowed, had occasion to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" what about our petty, insignificant selves that we should ever have been raised to such exaltation to be the ambassadors of the Most High to our fellow-men? We have been selected to carry upon our lips the message of peace and salvation to the perishing children of man; chosen to be workers together with God for the saving of souls and the peopling of heaven with ransomed spirits. And then to have been privileged to do this for the space of twenty-five years, does this not call for an uplifting of our hearts in fervent gratitude and to say: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name"? What results have accompanied your labors is something that eternity only will fully reveal. But we know, for God Himself tells us, that the moral and spiritual effects, the deathless influence, for time and eternity, of those words of life which you have publicly and from house to house, in joy and in sorrow, to sinner and to saint, year in and year out, proclaimed in your divine Master's name, are incalculable. God alone knows what a blessing has gone out from your ministry, and in how many ways you have been His instrument to comfort and instruct and help on their pilgrimage heavenward His dear children by the ever-precious Gospel, our only hope and consolation. Then, too, what direct, visible fruits you have been permitted to observe! What testimonials of appreciation have you not received from your own dear flock and from your brethren in the ministry, which evidence that your labors in the Lord have not been in vain! For all this blessing, this success, yours should be a grateful joy.

b) Uplifting of heart in fervent *prayer.* If there is one thing the power and the grand inspiration of which we have learned as one year after another has found us laboring in the Lord's vineyard, that one thing is prayer. More and more do we understand the request which the great apostle so constantly made to his friends: Pray for us. I know what above all else you would ask of your flock, their prayers, knowing that, having their prayers, you have their love, their cooperation and support. It is the member who remembers his pastor at the Throne of Grace who is his pastor's friend, and ever to have the loyal attachment of his members is a pastor's greatest encouragement and delight.

c) Your ministry is not yet ended. May it not be ended for many, many years! So, looking forward: *renewed consecration.* His you are. To Him you have, once and for all, devoted your gifts and talents for the glorification of His name by the saving of souls through the Gospel. The proclamation to men of Christ as their precious, only, and all-sufficient Redeemer still is your ever-deepening delight, so that with the apostle you also exclaim: "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" Onward, then: —

> Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadows,
> Though the loss sustained our spirit often grieves,
> Till by and by, the harvest and the labors ended,
> We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

God's Book tells us that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Consecrate yourself anew unselfishly and fully to the one single life-work of winning souls for Christ. And when the years allotted you on earth have closed and the summons reaches you, Come up hither, as the gates of pearl on high swing open and your ransomed spirit enters into its celestial home, may yours be the happy lot, as a special honor for long and faithful service, to receive from the hands of our Master the crown of gracious reward and to hear those words of cheering commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

L. Buchheimer, Sr.

Church Anniversary.

Mark 4, 30—32.

Out upon the rippling waters of the river Nile floats a tiny basket of bulrushes; enclosed within there is a beautiful baby boy. A mother's love had placed him there, his sister's eyes were guarding him there, and Divine Providence was hovering over him. Down to the river's brink comes the Egyptian princess, Pharaoh's only daughter; she spies the floating basket; her heart goes out to its pleading inmate; she commits it to the care of his mother; in due time he is brought to the court and educated in all the wisdom and military prowess of the Egyptians; he became the deliverer of God's ancient people — Moses, the lawgiver and greatest prophet of the Old Testament.

It was —— years ago when a tiny congregation was cast upon the rippling waters of time. Christian love had placed it there; sisterly eyes, in this city and elsewhere, were watching it there, and Divine Providence was hovering over it. Out to this precinct came fellow-Christians. The little charge, vested in the hands of a consecrated servant of the Lord, during this period grew to be a self-sustaining church, spiritually endowed, and our fond wish and sincere prayer to God is that it may develop into one of the most prosperous and influential houses of the Lord in this ever-expanding city. It is this train of thought which has caused us to choose the text styled the Parable of the Mustard-seed.

1.

There was good reason for our Lord in illustrating the spread of His kingdom, to choose just such a parable. It was a common saying among the Jews "as small as a grain of mustard-seed." Tiny as it was, sending up at first a delicate shoot, which an infant's foot might crush, it grew in Eastern countries to the height of seven or eight feet, overtopping all other herbs and becoming sufficiently expansive for birds to find shelter in its branches. And thus, said the Savior, speaking to a multitude gathered about Him, shall it be with the kingdom of heaven, the Church, which I am now inaugurating. Though it appear small and insignificant to you now, it will develop into a tree beneath whose branches the nations will rest in security. So it was. Its origin was infinitesimally small, its first advocates, followers, being limited in number, without homes, prestige, means, and influence, so that a well-directed blow would have wiped it off from the face of the earth. But its divine Founder had said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ's Church stands before our eyes as the marvel of the ages, the most conspicuous factor in the civilized world, under whose outstretched branches people of every country and clime have found, still find, shelter, salvation, eternal life.

As in general, so in particular. From a tiny mustard-seed, a small, insignificant beginning, this congregation sprang. How vivid still is the recollection of the few souls that made up its membership! How readily, humanly speaking, a single blow would have wiped it out of existence! Nor were discouragements and discrepancies lacking within to reduce its efficiency. But it had within it the indestructible quality of Christ's mustard-seed, and so it stands before us to-day a glorious specimen of the Lord's planting, exceedingly well-favored to behold, with many immortal souls taking lodgment beneath its roof. For this God be praised! To Him alone be the glory and the honor! And yet, while it is God alone who can and does bless and prosper His cause, it was necessary in days of old for Paul to plant and Apollos to water, so that God might give the increase. This is still necessary to-day. The Pauls must still plant and the faithful Apolloses assist in the watering that the kingdom of heaven may be extended. And how?

Growth is of two kinds. It is external and internal, and for healthy and sturdy development there must be both. A tree not only shoots upward, unfolding itself in luxuriant branches and foliage, but also grows downward, striking its roots ever more firmly in the soil. It is only thus that it can endure the blasts of winter and the fierce attacks of hurricane and storms in summer. The same law of growth and development pertains no less to the tree of Christ's heavenly planting, the Church. It is for a congregation to develop outwardly and inwardly. When does a congregation develop outwardly?

a) To begin with, a congregation should multiply numerically. Usually there is something radically wrong with a congregation if it has no progress to note, if no new faces appear in the pews. And there certainly is something radically wrong with any person professing to be a Christian who does not unite with a congregation. Where under the sun is there a cause of more importance and value to all the spiritual, personal, social, and political interests of man than the cause of Christ and His kingdom? On what has the best and wide-spreading good of the world most depended for the last two thousand years? On what does it most depend at this hour, and on what does it most depend for all time to come? Is it not this selfsame kingdom of Christ, His Church? People sometimes tell you they can be just as good Christians without being identified with one of these congregations. Can they? In our text the Lord speaks of His Church under the picture of a tree. Would you consider that a tree whose roots and trunk and branches were separated from another, all lying around in a heterogeneous mass? To be a tree, these several parts must be joined together and developed according to the laws of nature. Just so no one is a Christian who is not part of the divine organism, of the tree which Christ Himself has planted.

And this internal union through faith should manifest itself by external union. Lack to be thus identified, standing aloof, shows that there is something the matter with such a Christian. Every believer, man and woman, ought to have a church which he and she may call his and her own.

b) For the growth of the mustard-seed is needed faithful and consistent attendance. We shall not at the present dwell upon this particular in respect to you, the spiritual benefit it brings to your own souls, but in its relation to others. Man is a social creature. There is inspiration in numbers. It is a trait of human nature to desire to get into a place where nothing is left but standing-room. The small congregation tends to grow smaller. Every empty seat is a discouragement, every place occupied is an encouragement. Who comes, helps. Who remains away hinders. More than you may believe, the power of your presence communicates itself to others, to the pastor. Members hardly realize how great a part they have in the sermon, that success and efficiency in large measure depends upon them. And again, how it cheers the members of a congregation when visitors and strangers come to the services! A well-filled church attracts, a poorly filled church repels.

c) Again, there must be support and service. It is manifest that such an instiution as a church cannot subsist by itself. God has ordained that they who preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel. Every church has its educational, missionary, and social program. Then the house in which Christians meet in worship should accord with the character of the neighborhood, be as attractive as means can provide. And the Christian ought to work for his church. That person has gotten into the wrong place who joins a church expecting to do nothing; for the grand commission and object of the Church is to give men something to do. "To every man his work," is the Master's voice, and to every woman, too; and every one whose heart is right with his God will find something, yes, plenty, to do. There are such agencies as the regular monthly meeting, the success of which depends upon the members' presence, their voice and vote; the Sunday-school, its pupils calling for instructors; the ladies' aid society, young people's organization, the choir, all busy in Christian activity. Or if circumstances hinder cooperation with these endeavors for the growth of the mustard-seed of God's kingdom, how many other ways of serving, doing something for, the Lord! Among your acquaintances, possibly in your own family and house, what grander work than to turn the feet of some unsaved soul to the place of worship, to direct some child to the catechetical instruction! You are all God's ministers, and it becomes the duty of every one to examine how and where they can minister, assist in helping the good cause along. Familiar is the story of the two travelers who were wearily plodding along through the snow and bitter cold of their native country, when they discovered a man lying by the roadside, frozen and numbed. Remarked the one: "I cannot stay here to attend to this fellow. I must take care of my own life." The other, like the Good Samaritan of old, replied: "We ought to make some attempt to restore the poor chap," and, suiting the action to the words, he began to rub him vigorously and after a while saw his efforts rewarded. The unfortunate man opened his eyes and, arising, went with his rescuer. Imagine their surprise when, passing along, they saw the man who had so selfishly and heartlessly continued his way lying frozen to death. The noble one, by his labor of love, had stirred his blood into intense circulation and thereby had saved his own life. Spiritually, churchly, it is just that way. Seeking the welfare of others, working for Christ, you yourself are blessed.

2.

Just as essential as are these things, there are others, for the *inner* development of a congregation.

a) Loyal in the faith. A membership that has no definite and positive doctrinal conviction is like a tree that has taken no firm and stable roots. The roots of a healthful congregation are a fixed, uncompromising acceptance of, and adherence to, the truth as it is revealed in the inspired Volume of Truth, the Bible, and enumerated in a distinct, rotund, clear-ringing creed. The non-committal, milk-and-water type, which nods assent to every sort of religion and associates with anything and everything just because it is labeled with some Christian name and is decked out in a few churchly feathers, is not the brand of religion that is calculated to build up a strong church. There must be intelligent understandnig of what this church teaches and believes and a heartfelt sincerity of conviction to abide with that truth. Fickleness in anything is contemptible, and it is specially unsatisfactory in the great matters of God and religion.

b) Unity, concord, among the members. In his ever-memorable farewell address, George Washington said: "United we stand, divided we fall." A greater than Washington has said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand"; and His apostle: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Absolute similarity, uniformity of opinion and action in all matters, cannot and ought not be expected. What can be expected in a Christian congregation is forbearance, brotherly consideration. Diversity of opinion need not mean discord and strife, disturbance of peace. A church is prosperous when there is no quarreling, no angry contention, no sinful striving for power, when it is the earnest desire of all to work together, submitting in all matters of Christian teaching to the one-and-all deciding rule of

God's Word, and in matters of church polity the minority yields to the majority. When we see members of the same congregation arrayed against one another, when we see coldness and distrust where there should exist attachment and confidence, it requires no extraordinary sagacity to foresee the end. It is just as impossible for such a congregation to prosper as for a family that is in constant turmoil and agitation. The concord of its membership is its strength.

c) To use an illustration. Off the city of New York there was a range of rocks so deadly that the sailors called it Hell Gate, for many a precious crew had perished on these rocks. At last it was determined to call upon science and wealth to remove these obstructions. The most destructive blasting materials were placed within, and the full power of electricity was brought to bear upon it. Vessels were signaled to keep off the scene, and when all was clear, the representatives of the city met in the public hall where the electric wires were terminated, and the mayor brought his little girl and said, "Daughter, touch that button." The little, trembling finger touched the button. There was a moment's pause and then a roar, and the rocks were gone forever. It is not this organization, it is not any effort in this pulpit, it is not the sociability of its membership nor the number and efficiency of its societies, not any or all of these, considered in and by themselves; it is God, by His Spirit and through His Word (Rom. 1, 16), which touches the hearts, who gives vitality and strength and grants success. For His divine touch, His gracious indwelling in the hearts, in the homes, in the church, let us devoutly pray. Then shall yours be a prosperous church.

Come and Thy people bless
And give Thy Word success;
Spirit of Holiness,
On us descend.

L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

The Christian Education of Children.

Ps. 78, 5—7.

Humanity faces many important problems. One of the most fundamental and urgent, also perplexing, is the child problem.

The child problem turns about the general question as to how children shall be properly brought up.

The present and future well-being of the children as well as the welfare of society in general for to-day and to-morrow demands that this problem be thoroughly and effectually dealt with and that children be raised right.

The Church, too, is affected by this problem. Since the Church has a divinely given mission to the entire human race, since also the Church and the child need each other for the present and future welfare of each, and since finally the child problem as it affects the Church cannot be left to solve itself, the Church, as the Lord's handmaid, must apply herself diligently and conscientiously to the study and solution of her child problem.

The text before us refers to, and suggests, the proper method for dealing with the child problem in the Church. From it we draw the theme: —

The Church and the Child.

1.

As we study the text and make application of its lessons, we are brought to the realization that *God has committed the child to the Church.*

Let us briefly analyze the Lord's words as given us by the psalmist, v. 5. The holy writer without doubt refers to such commandments and directions as were given in Ex. 13, 14; Deut. 4, 9; 6, 6. 7; 11, 19; 31, 12. 13. — Impressive obligations laid upon God's people of old!

Then we read: vv. 6. 7. Here the reason, purpose, and objective of the aforesaid regulations are stated. God had in mind chiefly the spiritual welfare of the children of His people in that day. The children were in need of the teachings of their elders, and the welfare of the nation as such for the future depended on the careful upbringing and training of the children.

Making a general application of these teachings (Rom. 15, 4; 1 Cor. 10, 11), we draw the conclusion that God has committed the child to the Church. His will for the welfare of His people has always been, and still is, the same, in general as well as in particular, with respect to the adults as well as the children. Compare Prov. 22, 6; Joel 1, 3; John 21, 15; Eph. 6, 4. Therefore the appeal of our message to-day goes out to all Christian people within this congregation, collectively as well as individually.

There are two very natural and logical *reasons* why God has committed the welfare of the child to the Church.

For one thing, the child needs the Church. The Church is the body of believers. The believers in Christ joined together in this congregation are God's Church in this place. To the Church have been committed "the oracles of God," the divine mysteries of salvation, the means of grace, the treasures of the Kingdom. To the Church has also been given the command to make disciples of all nations, to "preach the Gospel to every creature," to suffer the little children to come to Jesus, etc. Not to keep them, but for the purpose of passing them on, has the Church received her endowments, to give to the young as well as to the old.

The world needs what the Church has, Ps. 14, 3; Eccl. 7, 20; Ps. 143, 2. Children need it, for they, too, are sinners, Gen. 8, 21; John 3, 6; and must be brought to Jesus if they are to be saved, Mark

10, 14. It was in connection with His saving purpose toward children that Jesus said: Matt. 18, 11. This is a fundamental need, more urgent than any mere temporal requirements, Matt. 16, 26.

This need of the child is much ignored, even denied, in our day. It must be clearly seen and strongly stressed if Christian people are to recognize their duty and do it. That duty is to supply the need here emphasized.

True, children belong to their parents first; it is they who bear the chief responsibility for the spiritual welfare of their children and who therefore should do the right thing by their little ones.

But the average parent is not in a position to make adequate provision for his child's spiritual needs; either he has not the time, or he lacks the ability and facilities, etc. In addition, many parents all around us are wholly indifferent to the spiritual wants of their children, either because they frankly reject Christianity, or because they have the mistaken notion that the religious life of their children can and should be left to develop by itself. The children of such parents are indeed to be pitied.

The Church, because of her mission to mankind and her responsibility for souls still lost, cannot and must not be indifferent to such a situation. The woe of the world's neglected children — among which are many in our own church and neighborhood—cries out to all Christian people for sympathy and action. The children of to-day need the Church.

Also, the Church needs the children. Children mean something to the Church to-day. They give life, youth, and promise to it. How we delight to see children in our church services! Their presence convinces the beholder that the Church lives, that it is active, that it is growing.

But chiefly, children are the Church's future. This future will not take care of itself. As the child is trained or not trained the man will think, act, and live. The Church of to-morrow is the responsibility of to-day. If we make no provision for the future, our children will have no Church when they are grown; they will blame us, and justly so. But God wants our children to inherit and enjoy the benefits that we have been blessed with and to walk in the way of life into which we have been led; cf. text, vv. 6. 7. Remember also that those of us who live twenty-five or thirty years longer will then be living in a Church which the children of to-day will make and govern. It will be the kind of Church which we are teaching our children to make to-day. Let us for the sake of our own old age help our children build a good Church.

The more conscientious care bestowed by us upon our children, the brighter the outlook for the Church's future. The Church needs the child.

2.

In view of what has thus far been brought out, *the Church must apply herself to the winning of children.*

All children, down to the last-born infant, are in need of redemption, and all of them have been redeemed. Hence they all are included in God's universal will of salvation, and the means of grace exist for their benefit. Of themselves they know as little about Jesus, their Savior, as do adults. If they are not brought to Jesus, they will remain forever out of touch with the kingdom of God, Rom. 10, 14—17. That is why the Lord directed the course of action set forth in our text, vv. 5. 6. This is all the more important since little children are physically and intellectually much more helpless than are their elders, who can read the Bible, come to church, follow the preaching, etc.

For this situation the Church must make proper provision — the *Church,* not the State. The State cannot supply spiritual needs. Public schools are by law kept from teaching religion, and rightly so. Even if no such law existed, it would be impossible to teach a religion that would be satisfactory to all concerned. Church people who demand that the State teach religion in its schools are not only asking the impossible, but are trying to shirk a duty which God has placed, not on the State, but on them. If the Church throughout the world will only see her obligation toward the children and discharge it, many millions of children will forever thank her.

The Church can and should and does carry on a number of activities designed to win children. She calls upon all parents to place the spiritual welfare of their children before and above all other home interests and to maintain a system—be it ever so simple—of religious home-training for their children. Let us rebuild the family altar. Next to the Church the Christian home is the most important pillar of human society.

The Church also should, and does, maintain special educational institutions for the Christian training of her children, — in part to supplement the work done in the Christian home, in part, also, to provide religious education for such children as receive no home-training. First among these institutions is the week-day, or parish, school. There is nothing to surpass or even equal it as a spiritual nursery of children. (Where such a school exists, the people should be encouraged to maintain and strengthen it. Where it does not exist, the opportunity to stress the desirability of such an institution should not be permitted to pass unimproved. Nothing valid can be said against the parish-school, but much can be said in its favor.)

Other institutions of a similar nature — the Sunday-school, summer-schools, Saturday-schools — must be made the most of wherever they exist or where there is a place for them.

Let us emphasize this, — the duty to win children rests upon the entire congregation, not only on such members as have children. The charge to preach and teach and to win souls for heaven has been given to the whole Church. Even as it is considered equitable in civic life to tax all citizens, whether they have children or not, for the up-keep of the public schools, — since the weal and woe of the children affects the entire nation, — so the obligation of supplying the spiritual needs of children rests upon every member of a Christian congregation. According to Gal. 6, 2 and Luk. 12, 48 it may fairly be expected of some who have no children, but are otherwise endowed with a normal measure of physical, mental, and spiritual talents to do as much for the winning and training of children as some parents who have a numerous offspring, if not more.

In addition to the financial support they give to the Church as a whole and to its educational departments in particular individual Christians can and will do other things for the soul needs of children. They can and should canvass their neighborhoods and bring "unchurched" children to day-school and Sunday-school, help to buy the necessary clothing and school equipment for such children as are too poor to supply their own needs, visit the parents of children not connected with the church, teach Sunday-school, help supervise the little ones during church services, etc.

Acts of such service not only help to win souls of little children for Jesus, they also contribute to the growth of the church, improve the moral tone of the whole community, and sometimes even open the doors of homes otherwise inaccessible to soul-winning endeavor.

We have already referred to the fact that the Lord is particularly interested in the welfare of little children. Hence we now add that He has given a special warning against neglecting the little ones and a special promise of favor for loving attention bestowed upon them, Matt. 18, 5. 6. 10.

Thanks be to God for past blessings upon our Church, our children, and ourselves! These blessings will continue to flow if we in grateful faith continue to appreciate them ourselves and give thought, time, labor, and money to the important task of transmitting them to our children. Therefore: 1 Cor. 15, 58.

What Others Have Said about Child-Training.

"If the kingdom of God is to come in power, we must begin with the children and teach them from the cradle. . . .

"See to it that you first of all have your children instructed in spiritual things, giving them first to God and then to secular duties. . . .

"If we wish to have proper and excellent persons both for civil and ecclesiastical government, we must spare no diligence, time, or cost in teaching and educating our children that they may serve God and the world, and we must not think only how we can amass money and possessions for them. . . . Let every one know therefore that above all things it is his duty (or otherwise he will lose the divine power) to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God and, if they have talents, to have them instructed and trained, to give them a liberal education, that men may be able to have their aid in government and in whatever is necessary. . . .

"Nothing will be of greater service to us and to our descendants than the maintenance of good Christian schools and the training of the young."— *Martin Luther.*

"IF we would preserve our liberty as a nation, we must educate our youth religiously." — *George Washington.*

"NOBODY knows how to teach morality effectually without religion. Exclude religion from education, and you have no foundation upon which to build moral character."—The late *Charles Eliot* of Harvard.

"I THINK it is the truth that our education must be shot through with religion. If you subtract God from education, you do not even attain secular education, but are left with no education at all." — *George Wharton Pepper.*

Fort Smith, Ark. KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

Mission-Work.

Matt. 9, 35—38.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was a missionary. He went about the cities and villages of the Holy Land, teaching in the synagogs and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. There were few cities and villages He did not visit in the course of His public ministry. In one city the people begged Him to stay, but He answered them: "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefor am I sent," Luke 4, 43.

Jesus went to the people. As Jesus, so His Church. There are those who say: Let those who want to hear the Gospel come to us. There are those who think that when the call came from Macedonia: "Come over and help us," Paul should have answered: "Come to us." Christ's last command was: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," Mark 16, 15. These are our marching orders. In conformity with the last wish and command of Christ our Church has made it its business and its only business to go and preach the Gospel of the grace of God to those who are unacquainted with it. Question: Are we carrying on this blessed work with the energy and zeal it deserves? To stimulate greater zeal and activity on our part we shall consider —

Christ's Mission-Appeal in Our Text.

1. The deplorable condition of the multitudes;
2. The lack of laborers;
3. How this lack may be supplied.

1.

The spiritual condition of the world's teeming multitudes is deplorable. Whole nations are without God, without hope, without salvation. Jesus compares their spiritual condition to fainting. "He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted," v. 36. People faint from different causes.

Sometimes people faint from hunger. In heathen lands famines occur frequently. Hardly a year passes that we do not read of a famine somewhere in one or the other of the heathen countries. Primitive means of transportation and communication. In India there are said to be fifty million people who are always hungry, who are happy if they can have but a handful of rice once a day. — However, the Lord is not speaking of these frequent famines in heathen lands. He is here speaking of a hunger that cannot be stilled with bread. He is speaking of the hunger of the soul. At first hunger is hard to bear. By and by, however, some say that a positive revulsion against food sets in. This is precisely the spiritual condition of the spiritually starving and fainting multitudes. They have been so long without the Bread of Life that, when it is brought to them, they at first push it aside. — Death from starvation is said to be very painful, accompanied by convulsions. How much more awful the death of a soul dying from spiritual starvation! We who have the bread of life so abundantly, ought we not to supply the fainting multitudes with the manna from heaven? When the need is so great, will crumbs be enough?

Sometimes people faint because they are sick. Much disease in heathen lands. China is called the fountain of epidemics. Unsanitary living conditions. Heat. Deplorable as sickness of the body is, a sick soul is more deplorable. Sin-sickness the worst epidemic. In the dark lands of heathendom sin holds sway. The devil is in the air. Social life "beastly rotten," as one missionary put it. Sin worshiped. Sickness leads to death and the grave. Sin leads to eternal death and suffering, unless forgiven. Our duty to bring the heathen the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus, the only remedy for the leprosy of sin, the healing balm, the oil of salvation. Where the need is so great, will a few drops suffice?

People sometimes faint from overwork. Twenty thousand factories in Japan, where people work from twelve to sixteen hours a day.

Far more deplorable to see people faint from self-torture and self-imposed works, whereby they hope to appease the anger of their gods: crawling on knees, sleeping on nails, gazing for hours into the sun, hanging from trees head down, sitting in the hot sun with fires raging about. Ought we not to have compassion on them and proclaim to them the glad tidings of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, not by works?

Jesus furthermore describes the multitudes as shepherdless sheep. "He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd," v. 36. Sheep helpless; must be fed and watered, watched over and protected. Jesus is our Good Shepherd, who leads us to the green pastures of the Word of God, beside the still waters of the blessed Sacraments, who comforts and upholds us in all troubles and afflictions, and finally leads us through the dark valley of death to the green pastures of heaven. This Good Shepherd multitudes have not. They feed on the weeds of false religions and drink from wells that are poisoned. They go through life without comfort, peace, and hope and must die without a Savior.

No wonder Jesus was filled with compassion, v. 36. His compassion so great that, seeing the fainting and shepherdless multitudes, He Himself became faint. For them His heart grew faint in Gethsemane, for them His knees grew faint when He carried His cross to Calvary. For the sake of the scattered and neglected multitudes of sheep He became a sheep Himself, yes, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Can we be without compassion?

Jesus speaks of multitudes, v. 36. Multitudes indeed. In our own country half of the people are not connected with any church. To the south of us Mexico, Central America, and South America with a population as large as that of our country. In these countries conditions are very much what they were in Europe before the Reformation. On the other side of the Pacific Ocean lies Japan, an empire of 65 million, China with a population of over 400 million, India, "the country of villages," with a population of 380 million, and Africa, "the dark and sobbing continent," with about 200 million people. We hardly realize how many people these figures represent. If all the people in China were to march by here day and night in single file at the rate of fifteen a minute, it would require sixty years until the population of China had passed by. If all the people living in India were to take one another by the hand and form a huge circle, that circle would be big enough to go around the earth ten times. When Christ compared these multitudes to a harvest-field, v. 37, He was not exaggerating.

2.

Though the harvest is plenteous, the laborers are few, v. 37. Let us look at the facts. Refer to latest statistics of our Church. How many laborers have we in our country, in Mexico, in Central and South America, in China, in India, in Japan, in Africa? Truly, the laborers are few. Of course, ours is not the only church-body to do mission-work. The number of all Christian workers in heathen lands, including not only missionaries, but also their wives, teachers, physicians, nurses, printers, is estimated at thirty thousand. Still Christ's words are true: The laborers are few. For every missionary one hundred and fifty thousand heathen. Imagine a territory half as large as the United States with only two missionaries. Imagine one missionary located in Portland, Me., and another missionary located in Houston, Tex., and one hundred million people living between them. That is the situation in Africa. Not all the Christian workers in foreign lands proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The consequences of the lack of laborers. What a waste of blood-bought souls!

3.

How this lack of laborers may be supplied. Naturally we look to Jesus for an answer. He calls Himself the Lord of the harvest, v. 38. He, if any, ought to know what is to be done, how this obvious lack of laborers may be supplied. He says: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest," v. 38.

Prayer is needed in mission-work. The history of missions — the history of prayer. Paul; the early Christian Church. Prayer and God's Word alone can move the hearts of parents to present their child to the service of God as Hannah presented Samuel to the Lord, 1 Sam. 1, 24—28. Prayer and God's Word alone can move young men to say with Isaiah: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me," Is. 6, 8. Prayer and God's Word alone can make us willing to support the cause of missions. (Refer to Synod's financial requirements.)

Let us awake to our responsibility. The need is so obvious, the remedy so simple. Let us pray to-day and every day for the greatest cause and the most wonderful work in the world — mission-work. Pray that God may give us missionaries who shall carry God's Word, that precious seed (Is. 55, 10. 11), to the heathen at home and abroad. That Word will then do its work, 1 Pet. 1, 23—25; Luke 8, 11; Rom. 1, 16. G. Mahler.

Outline for a Sermon after Attending District Synodical Meeting.

Neh. 4, 6.

Another meeting of our synodical District has become history. Your pastor, teacher, and lay delegate have returned. The latter will make his official report to the congregation at its next voters' meeting. It is hoped that all our voting members will attend this meeting to hear this report. For it was an inspiring convention, and those of us who had the privilege to take part in its sessions have come home with new enthusiasm and fresh zeal for the Lord's work.

As you know, the work of the Lord within our synodical District receives careful and prayerful consideration by the representatives of our congregations at these meetings. (Mention the important questions discussed.) This work, however, does not concern the delegates alone, but every congregation and all our members in the District. It is also your work. Without your willing cooperation and that of all our Christians the work cannot be carried on properly. In order, then, that you may know in detail all that was done at the last convention a printed report of its proceedings is being prepared, which will be distributed later. Be sure to read it! It will be time and effort well spent. If only all our members would actively interest themselves in the work which the Lord is directing in our District, would diligently read the reports, and gladly work together in the execution of its resolutions, how much more could be accomplished! To this end, that interest and activity in this respect may improve in our midst, that we all may be inspired to greater efforts and more ready cooperation, let me address you this morning on the subject: —

Doing the Lord's Work.

Doing the Lord's work requires: —

1. Willingness; *2. Cooperation.*

1.

"The people had a mind to work." Tell briefly the story of Nehemiah's efforts in carrying on the work of rebuilding Jerusalem, begun by Ezra, and the opposition encountered.

Doing the Lord's work always arouses opposition, and many difficulties are met with. From without: Satan and the evil world; from within: our own sinful and depraved flesh, which would much rather enjoy the flesh-pots of Egypt than labor and suffer with God's children. But the Lord has called us to this work. In the Second Petition we continually pray for its extension. There is no work more important than this anywhere, Matt. 6, 33. The opportunities for the work are great. There is a general defection from truth. Many churches are waxing cold and indifferent. The number of "open doors" for the true Gospel is increasing. See Dr. Carroll's latest statistics on the religious bodies in our country. What he says about city and rural conditions should impress upon us what great opportunities are ours. (The results in the District's own missions might be mentioned. Show also how Synod by means of all the phases of its activity is furthering the cause of Christ's kingdom.)

"The people had a mind to work"; they used the gifts God gave them for the work of rebuilding Jerusalem. Some planned, others directed, still others did the actual building, while the materials required were prepared and brought by others; but each one used his talents and his skill.

Thus in the work of the Lord to-day each Christian has some talents, and these are to be used in the interest of the Kingdom. (Cp. Eph. 2, 19—21; 4, 16; Matt. 25, 15; Rom. 12, 6 ff.; 1 Cor. 4, 7; 12, 4 ff.) Each according to his gifts and abilities, that is the Lord's rule, Matt. 25, 22. 23; Ps. 2, 11; Gal. 6, 2. 10; Heb. 12, 28; Mark 10, 43. 44; Luke 12, 48; 1 Pet. 4, 11.

"The people had a mind to work" implies zealousness. The Savior's example: He was consumed with zeal for the Lord's house and was always about His Father's business, Luke 8, 39; Acts 18, 24 ff.; Rom. 9, 3; Eccl. 9, 10; 2 Cor. 9, 2.

"The people had a mind to work" implies that it was not a burden, but a joy to them. We often hear complaints about the requirements for the Lord's work. There is not always joy in the effort and the gift. It should not be so, Neh. 12, 43; Ps. 40, 8; Ps. 126, 5. 6; Luke 10, 17; John 4, 36.

What a joy it is to pastor, teacher, church officers, to all earnest Christians, when the members of God's Church show a zealous, joyous willingness to be engaged in the Lord's work! Let the example of the builders of Jerusalem inspire us all to have "a mind to work"!

2.

"So built we the wall," thus reports Nehemiah, the leader of the returned exiles. He did not do the work alone nor only a few with him, but all the people are included in this *we*. It was a cooperative endeavor. Every one, using his talents and gifts for the common goal, worked together with his brethren. No one went on a strike, and none sought the glory of the achievement for himself alone. "So built *we* the wall!" (See context, Neh. 4, 16. 17. 21.)

The same kind of cooperation is necessary to-day if the Lord's work is to go forward: the individuals within the congregation; the congregation with its sister congregations; the circuit with the other circuits; the District with the other Districts for the General Body. Our whole synodical machinery is built up on such voluntary cooperation, Acts 15, 1—31; 1 Cor. 12, 4—31.

The entire history of the Church is a history of such cooperation.

Scripture gives us many examples: Moses and Aaron; Caleb and Joshua; the Seventy; the Twelve; Paul and Barnabas, etc. (Illustration: the bundle of sticks; the coals in a fire; the links of a chain; the motor in an automobile.) Where each goes his own way, seeks his own interests, there is disintegration, retrogression; where all work together for the common good, there is real construction and advancement.

As we love our Lord and His kingdom and our brethren who are united with us in a common faith, let us prayerfully cooperate in this work, "knit together as one man," Judg. 20, 11; let us give of our time and of our means to further the Savior's cause.

We are building the invisible spiritual temple of God. Every stone in this structure is an immortal soul saved from perdition. What a privilege thus to cooperate with God in soul-saving! Jas. 5, 20; Mark 16, 20; 1 Cor. 3, 9; 2 Cor. 6, 1; 2 Tim. 4, 5; 1 Cor. 15, 58; Phil. 1, 27.

Who builds the Church? Each child and man
  Who lends some talent to the whole,
All blended to achieve His plan,
  All fruiting in a Gothic soul.

God builds the Church from all the skills
Of human minds and human wills;
From stalwart brawn and brilliant brain,
From artist-dream and muscle strain,
From childhood's mites, from gifts of age,
He builds His Church, our heritage.

W. G. Polack.

Reunion of Former Catechumens.

2 Kings 4, 26.

You have gathered for a happy reunion. Time was when you stood before the altar in the solemn rite of confirmation. Made a vow by which you bound yourselves to your Lord Jesus Christ for all the days of your lives; vowed to serve and obey Him, never to desert Him; vowed that neither riches nor poverty, neither honor nor reproach, neither life nor death, shall separate you from Him.

Have you kept your vow? Loyal to Christ and His Church? Do you to-day belong to that blessed class of people who Sunday after Sunday wend their way to the house of the Lord for spiritual nourishment through the Gospel? Do you daily live as becometh the Gospel; live in Christ, with Christ, for Christ? "Is it well with thee?" Is it well with your souls?

Interesting question; and since many have mistaken notions in this matter of the soul's well-being, and since a mistake on this point is vital and involves most fearful and eternal consequences, it is of utmost practical importance that each one of you entertain clear and correct views in regard to this entire subject.

"Is It Well with Thee?"

1.

Text takes us back to the time of the prophet Elisha. Often had to pass on his journey through a place called Shunem, a village situated about fifty miles north of Jerusalem. In this village dwelt a family of three, father, mother, and their little boy. Bible calls mother a *great* woman, distinguished person, doubtless a true servant of the God of Israel. With consent of her husband she provided a guest-chamber for Elisha in her house that he might find rest and refreshment, not doubting that her home would be blessed for his sake, by his instructions and example. One day, in the midst of the harvesting season, the little boy of the family left his mother to join his father and the reapers in the field. The hot sun of the East beat upon him, and as he came to his father, he threw his hands to his head and cried, "My head, my head!" Turning to a servant, the father said, "Carry him to his mother." When he had been brought home, he lay on his mother's lap till noon and then died. The mother laid the body of her child on the bed in the guest-chamber and immediately hastened to Elisha, who was then on Mount Carmel. Seeing her afar off, Elisha said to his servant Gehazi, "Yonder is the Shunammite; run to meet her." Gehazi started down the mountainside, and when he came near enough, he cried out to her after the manner of the Orient, "Is it well with thee?"—We shall now leave the original occurrences of our text to dwell on the question, Is it well with your souls?

Negative answer. It is not well with any man *as he is by nature.* Soul in darkness, in guilt, in fetters, under curse of divine Law, under sentence of death, child of perdition, Eph. 2, 3. If a man is a despiser of heavenly Father, not well with him. If he has no respect for God's Law, God's Church and appointments, not well with him. If he is a slave of passion, a nurse of hatred and revenge, a worshiper of self and vanity, not well with him. If unwilling to serve God as a dutiful child, if averse to association with God's people, absenting himself from God's house and table, disdaining to do homage to the Savior, not well with him. It cannot be as long as he is in this natural, unconverted, state.

It is not of necessity well with one who *boasts of his ancestry.* Relation with those who are saved does not insure salvation. Your father may have been a righteous man before God and your mother a saint, and you may be lost. Your father's righteousness cannot be imputed to you, your mother's faith cannot save you, Hab. 2, 4; Luke 7, 50.

It is not of necessity well with one who boasts of an *early Christian training.* You may have been a studious pupil in the Christian day-school and Sunday-school; you may have given a good account of yourself in the pastor's catechumen class and before the congregation on the day of your confirmation; you may have been a regular attendant at divine services for a time. But this is not enough. Early training is not a guarantee for spiritual well-being in middle age or old age. Matt. 24, 13; Rev. 2, 10.

It is not of necessity well with one *who claims church-membership.* You may join all the churches in the city, if that were possible, and yet have no soul-health. The most ardent churchmen in the days of Christ were the Pharisees. So churchmanly and religious were they that they exalted themselves above others; yet sevenfold woe from lips of Christ. God makes it the duty of every man, woman, and child to be a member of His Church. However, one may affiliate with a local congregation and be a member in good standing before the eyes of men, but if his name is not written in the Book of Life, it is not well with him.

It is not of necessity well with one who *subscribes the creed* of the Church. A man may say: "I venerate the grand old truths which my forefathers confessed. I lay my hands on these truths and say, I believe them. I believe the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Augsburg Confession, and the Catechism from cover to cover. I am orthodox." And yet the poor fellow may have only faith of the head and mouth, and hence it is not well with him.

It is not of necessity well with one who boasts of his *morality and good report.* He may say: "I am neither unchaste nor dishonest nor profane. On the square, respected by fellow-men. Never formed bad habits, never entangled myself with evil associations. My whole manner of living will not defile my memory in after-years." And yet that man may not be fit for the kingdom of God, and hence it is not well with him. Rom. 3, 28.

2.

What, then, are the marks by which one may judge rightly in this matter of well-being? Acts 16, 31; Mark 16, 16. If it is to be well with one, there must be, first of all, repentance of sin and sinfulness. David; Peter; Paul. There must be a *turning to Christ by faith.* There must be an appreciation of Christ. There must be a yielding to Christ and the acceptance with the heart of the salvation He offers. Christ came down from heaven (active and passive obedience — Sin-bearer). See Him there, affixed to the transverse wood on Calvary! His arms outstretched as if to embrace the entire world of sinners. Hear Him: "Look, look, believe! This is what I have done for you, O world. With My sacrifice I have covered all your sins. Look! Live!" Are your eyes open to see Him as your personal Redeemer? Are your ears open to hear that cry? Are your lips open to say: "Just as I am," etc. "Thank God, I am redeemed, not with gold or silver, but with the blood of Christ"? Is your heart wide open for Christ's habitation, so that the Christ *for you* becomes the Christ *in you* and that He may be seen in your temper and all your activities? Then it is well with thee. (Emphasize Christ *for* you, Christ *in* you.)

If Christ is in you, you will be a *churchgoing man*. Continued spiritual well-being requires nourishment, the food which Christ offers in His house, in His Word, in His Sacraments. To be and remain in proper soul-health, you must partake of this food. If it is well with you, it is to you a sweet and heavenly thing to come to this sanctuary and sit down to the heavenly banquet for the refreshment of your soul. Frequent communing for the strengthening of inner man. If it is well with you, you will unite in saying with the sweet singer of Israel: Ps. 84, 1—3.

If Christ is in you, you will be a *praying man*. Your faith will make you pray. Not the mere vain repetitions of prayers, parrotlike. I mean the cry of a child to his father. "Is it well with thee," *i. e.*, do you tell your wants and desires to God? Do you seek His face and ask His mercies?

If you have the Spirit of Christ, you will grow in grace and wisdom. Christ expects His disciples, endowed with power from on high, to show pluck and vigor in their profession, to combat unbelief and every other evil, to run the way of His commandments. He who is united with Christ by faith is to be steadfast, abounding in the work of the Lord, Phil. 4, 13. When temptations arise, he is to conquer them. When afflictions come, he is to stand firm. Nothing should break down his confidence, his courage, his hope; for the Christ in him is his Strength and his Salvation. "Is it well with thee," *i. e.*, are you a valiant soldier, going "onward as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before"? Do you speak not only with words, but also with your actions, not only in creeds, but also in deeds? Do you let your light shine in character, in the influence of your earthly career? Do you say in sincerity of heart: "Lord Jesus, Thou art my Teacher, my Friend, my Redeemer, my Life, my Joy, my Hope, my Lord and God; take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee"?

Says one: "Not well with me. Do not love the Church as I did on the day of my confirmation. I have neglected my prayers. I am not active, courageous, obedient. I am spiritually a bedridden invalid." You need a physician. There is but one who can cure you. Do not try to doctor yourself with reforms and charities and benevolent doings. There is no cure for your ailing soul save through Christ. To Him you must go. He is within easy reach (Gospel). Office hours at all times, day and night. His treatment is free. He will prescribe repentance. Not pleasant thing to take, but sins, to be forgiven, must be acknowledged, lamented, and confessed. Then faith, faith in the cleansing blood of Christ, 1 John 1, 7. Move about in the open air in the garden of God's Word, in the bright sunshine of God's love, and it will be well with thee. And then, while your day of grace lasts, see that you do not sin away or neglect your opportunity to be healed, Ps. 95, 8; Heb. 3, 7. 13. (Hymn 50.) THEODORE WALZ.

Walther League Service.

Josh. 3, 5.

The historical situation from which the text has been chosen is significant. The children of Israel are about to conclude their desert wanderings and to enter the Promised Land. Moses is dead and has been buried on Mount Nebo by the hand of God, and a new generation of Israelites is taking the place of the fathers. Joshua, whose name has the same meaning as Jesus, has assembled the people on the eastern bank of the Jordan, within full sight of the land which Jehovah had promised Abraham and his children. Between the host of the Israelites and the Promised Land the Jordan rushes on in its descent to the Dead Sea, and on the other side of the river there are many and powerful peoples, whose stature and prowess had previously intimidated the Israelites. At this moment, when the hopes of Israel needed strengthening, Joshua utters the words of our text.

To-day we, too, are journeying on toward a promised land in a twofold sense: first, that beyond this life we look for paradise regained, and then, that in this life, if the Lord gives us more days, we look for the promise of a greater to-morrow for our Church, in which especially the young people of to-day will find problems and opportunities. But between us and this promised land of a greater Church there loom up barriers of indifference, lukewarmness, hesitation, and fearful anticipation, and as we think of the enemies that rise up against the truth of God that prevails in our Church, our spiritual Joshua, Jesus Himself, tells us: "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow" (in the veiled and uncertain future in which the young people of to-day may take the places of leadership now occupied by their fathers and mothers) "the Lord will do wonders among you."

Applying these words, then, to the youth of our Church, especially as it is united in the official young people's organization of the Church, the Walther League, we shall consider —

A Divine Message to Our Lutheran Youth.

Under the enlightening guidance of God's Holy Spirit we shall see that this message contains —

1. *A command: "Sanctify yourselves";*
2. *A promise: "To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you."*

1.

a) "Sanctify yourselves" means to make yourselves holy, to set yourselves apart for God, to purify and cleanse yourselves. This is the absolute and unavoidable requirement for divine blessing. (Lev. 11, 44: "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy," and a host of other parallels.) While for the Israelites of Joshua's day this command would also involve ceremonial rites and rituals, for us, who live in the fulness of Christ's appearance, it means accepting the precious, God-granted means of becoming sanctified and holy in the sight of God — the Gospel, which kindles faith in Jesus and His all-complete and everlasting atonement. Here we have the fundamental basis for spiritual growth, a principle which must be emphasized again and again in a materialistic age, an age in which people like to suggest external ways and systems and procedures for developing the Church.

What we need in the Church therefore is a youth whose heart is sanctified to God with a faith that is founded on, and grounded in, the Gospel of Christ Crucified. Regular attendance at Church, daily Scripture-reading, frequent participation in the Sacrament, these are the Scriptural methods for increasing our spirituality and deepening our sanctification. Of course, all this is peculiarly difficult for young people in an age like this, when the forces of iniquity are working overtime to tear such faith out of their hearts through Christless education, Christless recreation, and Christless business activities. The frequent communion with God through prayerful meditation in His Word will prove a potent antidote.

b) With sanctified hearts our faith must be reechoed in sanctified lives. As the first followers of Jesus were called Christians because they bore the marks of the Crucified in their lives, so to-day Christian young people must present the evidence of their faith in Christ-endowed lives. We ought to be able to tell Christian young men by their conversation, by their devotion to their homes and parents, by their whole attitude toward life and its problems. We ought to be able to tell Christian young women by their modesty in clothing, by their wholesome, maidenly interest in things that surround them, by their friends and associates. What tremendously potent testimonies such young people can offer to the work of their Church!

But a sanctified life involves more; it is a life that contends for the faith and is actively concerned about showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. The full implications of our Christian careers bring with them the happy opportunities and the unavoidable obligation of telling others about our Church, of acting as missionaries for the supreme cause of humanity, of becoming assistants to our pastors and teachers. This testifying to Christ and our Church is not easy, but it is possible. The objections which are usually advanced: no time, no ability, no opportunity, etc., are not valid, and they often rob young people of one of the rarest and happiest privileges which is rightly theirs. Surely when we hear this, our conscience smites us. We are wanting in this holiness. Let us turn to be cleansed and then strive all the more with St. Paul: Phil. 3, 12—14.

2.

a) "To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." When Israel sanctified itself, the Lord did do wonders for it. Read the following chapters of the first half of the Book of Joshua and see how the river Jordan was parted for them, how Jericho and Ai fell, how the Hittites and the Amorites and the Canaanites, together with a group of lesser people, uniting to hold back the onward march of Israel, were overthrown; how the sun and moon were made to stand still until the victory was Israel's; how altogether thirty-one kings were destroyed and their territory taken, not by the natural prowess of Israel, but by the direct intervention of God, who did wonders among His people, according to His promise.

b) The days of wonders have not passed. It is true that Jesus is no longer with us bodily to perform such miracles or to perpetuate His marvelous ministry with its wonders among us to-day. Yet this promise of our text is to us and our children. Think of the history of the Church and the miracles of mission in which, beyond all possibility of human comprehension and explanation, the Cross has overcome the persecution, blasphemy, ignorance, intolerance of pagan polytheism, and skeptical atheism and has always proved itself to be what it claims it is, namely, the power of God to salvation. Think of what that one poor monk Luther accomplished by means of the Word of God.

The most important thought for us is the realization that this wonder-working God is ours to-day through Jesus. He performs miracles in our own lives through the working of the Holy Spirit. He uses us to perform miracles in the hearts of others through the unfathomable wonder of conversion and regeneration, Ps. 119, 130; 1 Pet. 1, 23; Heb. 4, 12. He does all this in a collective way by performing miracles in our Church, as the history and development in our Synod in its relatively short span of years illustrate.

And by His own repeated promises He will continue to do this, so that, if God permits us to see years to come, the young people of to-day will have the assurance: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and will employ the resources of their wonder-working God for the extension, beyond the bounds of man's imagination, of the kingdom of the Christ of God.

W. A. Maier.

Anniversary of Ladies' Aid Society.

Luke 8, 3.

Do you know that I had difficulty in finding a suitable text for this occasion, the anniversary of the ladies' aid society? Why? Because there were no such organizations in the first churches, naturally, for they were "missions," as we now term them. There were matters of first and primary importance to be seen to, so matters of secondary importance had to wait.

Are we to infer from this that a ladies' aid society is superfluous in to-day's church-work? By no means. There are many ways in which women, conjointly and severally, can and do further Christ's cause, and one of them is by organizing for this purpose. — Now, in the light of Holy Writ,

How Does a Ladies' Aid Society Fit into the Congregation?

1. It does not in any sense aim to supplant the congregation.

2. It serves the Master by aiding the congregation.

1.

a) You will note that our first part is negative; we wish to show what a ladies' aid society should *not* aim to do. — To enter upon, and remain on, the right road, we must not take the wrong road. Of the Ten Commandments only two are of a positive nature; the rest say, "Thou shalt *not*." On the Last Day the Supreme Judge will recount to those on His left what they did *not* do, Matt. 25, 41—43.

b) And so it will be a distinct aid to us to ponder briefly on the dangers a ladies' aid society should guard against if it would serve the Lord most efficiently. If you are to nurse a very sick person, you inquire in the first place what *not* to do or to give.

c) A ladies' aid society — we might say the same of other church organizations — is not sufficient in itself. We mean the organization should not end in a dead alley. They should not see in a certain temporal object its sole purpose and reason for existing. The ever-present question of raising money for local, synodical, or charitable purposes is a point for illustration. Assuming that all the means and methods are beyond reproach, does it not lower the standing and standard of a ladies' aid society to consider it merely a money-making machine? And such a construction counteracts the spirit of free-will, spontaneous gifts within and without the organization, for it very easily becomes a constraint. The voters, finding a deficit in the accounts, may resolve that the ladies meet the deficit by entering upon some money-making scheme. Then there is danger that, like a disease, this will spread to other organizations in the congregation, until the world scoffs at the Church of God as merely an aggregation of adepts engaged in wheedling money out of the unsuspecting.

d) But you say, Thank God we see that danger and watch our step. We rather make it a point and purpose to gain members for our organization; this in a legitimate way increases our dues, and then we foster sociability in our own circle and in the congregation by our meetings and activities. — To contribute of our substance for the cause of the Master or otherwise to minister to Him in His members is in the spirit of our text. And the social feature, too, is very commendable. There is also Scriptural support for that. We are told Acts 2, 42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine *and fellowship.*" You are not doing your full duty by merely continuing steadfastly in the *doctrine*, attending the divine services and using the Sacraments, when at the same time you ignore the fellowship of the believers. You would then be spiritually selfish, always willing to take the love of God, but unwilling to pass it on to others, so that they may partake of it also. We are true disciples of the Master only if we love the brethren; and to prove this love, we must come into contact with them. We have in mind hours of social innocent enjoyment engaged in by Christians and sponsored by a society like yours. "Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above." (Hymn 462.)— But again a warning is in place here. *Do not rest satisfied with having achieved this end of Christian sociability,* laudable as it is. To illustrate. If a sister who is a member of your society pays her dues, attends the meeting, and meets all the requirements of membership, neither she nor the society should be content with this. These questions should also be asked, Is she a regular attendant at divine services? Does she partake of the Lord's Supper frequently? Is she active in getting people to join the communion of saints or only the ladies' aid society?

e) You have a commendable history. (Statistics or brief statements.) We should mention such facts. Let your light so shine, etc., Matt. 5, 16. But our light should glorify the *Father.* A competitive spirit is sometimes encouraged among church organizations for gaining members or raising funds, and we are then prone to speak in terms reflecting pride in achievements of our own. If so, we are again facing the dead alley — ending short of the real purpose. This will be attained only if the society is always careful to fit into the congregation by aiding in its important work. This, you recall, is the second part of our theme.

2.

a) Let us get the connection of our text. (Read v. 1.) Christ did aggressive mission-work (point out), and in this "the Twelve were with Him." They *assisted* Him as good laymen will assist their pastor. And to advance the blessed work of "showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God," the *women assisted*, as only women can, by ministering to Him of their substance. They considered themselves a part of that organization which Christ permitted to help Him.

b) We used the term *organization.* You heard us say that in that early day there were no ladies' aid societies. This is true when taken literally. But was there not that tie "that binds our hearts in Christian love," a tie which, we hope, exists to-day among you, stronger than that of a printed constitution?

c) What impelled the women of our text to help the Master all they could in bringing the Gospel to lost mankind? We are told in v. 2 that certain women, among them Mary, called Magdalene, had been healed of dire infirmities and were now, moved by a true spirit of gratitude, endeavoring to help their fellow-beings by helping the Lord. The question comes to us, Would or could they have ministered to Christ in a manner pleasing to Him if they, in the first place, had not been healed of their infirmities? Can you be a truly efficient member of your society, of your congregation, of your Church, unless you have been healed of your spiritual infirmities — have received forgiveness of sins and by absolution are an acknowledged member of Christ's spiritual body? It is then only you can love Him because you have experienced that He first loved you, 1 John 4, 19.

d) Pursuing this line of thought, since your society is composed of individuals, is it not true that, if the organization is to be successful, the individual must be a consecrated member of the communion of saints? What if an organization would flare and glare in the brilliancy of its achievements, but the individual members were not members of Christ's body? All its activities would be in vain; yea, more, they would be positively displeasing to God; even "the solemn meeting" would then be an "iniquity," Is. 1, 11—13.

e) On the other hand, we cannot exaggerate the supreme importance — reaching even into eternity — of the work of each consecrated member. In fact, the great God would not give you work to do which is not important, dignified, and far-reaching in its results. (Develop the thought from Rom. 12, 4 and 1 Cor. 12, 21. 22 of every member's being a required cog in the machinery and that we are usually mistaken when pronouncing on the *relative or comparative* importance of some work, certain positions, etc.) So we find the close and intimate cooperation of all members in a society or in the congregation to be a required condition for effectual work.

f) In union there is strength for achieving the purposes set. Worldly organizations recognize this. So did Christ in "organizing" the family, the Church, the State. While the organizing of a society such as yours is not compulsory, it is a factor of great moment, and when conditions are favorable to its organization, dare we neglect the opportunity to do good? Jas. 4, 17.

g) *How glorious to minister to the Master* under the auspices of the Church!

1) As an organization practising *charity* according to Biblical injunctions, dealing bread to the hungry, providing shelter for the outcast, covering the naked, not hiding oneself from our own flesh, Is. 58, 7. A good slogan is, "The soul of charity is charity for the soul." Alleviations of bodily suffering should lead to, or accompany, efforts to create a thirst for true righteousness and to quench that thirst. How exalted a work, carried on by the society, to visit the afflicted in body and open the way for the Word of God to do its beneficent work, perhaps through the instrumentality of the pastor!

2) Practising *hospitality* (synods, conferences). Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares, Heb. 13, 3.

3) A development, or *spreading, of hospitality.* "Use hospitality *one to another* without grudging," 1 Pet. 4, 9.

4) Foster a spirit of cooperation and helpfulness (between pastor and members, organizations within the congregation, possibly ladies' organization in other congregations), exhibiting that faith which worketh by love, Gal. 5, 6.

5) There is a spirit of devotion joined to a consciousness of ability if an organized number undertake a work which an individual could never accomplish. It is also a great help in battling the forces which withstand the work of Christ — such as discouragement, belittling, unjust carping and criticizing, seeming failure, but followed by renewed efforts better organized.

6) There is the joy of victory. An occasion such as to-day. And I have in mind a seemingly sadder event. I vision a casket covered with flowers and memorial wreaths, borne slowly down the aisle, followed by the members of the organization. A sister has finished her course, fought the good fight, received the crown. Mourning is worn, tears are shed. All in its place. And yet the society has been able to minister to Christ by having aided the sister to minister. A gold star is to be added to the roster of the society, for a member has died in Christ. Ah, a ladies' aid society will aid its own members to remain on the narrow, up-hill road which leads to the stars. It will aid others, far and near, members or not, to do the same. It will carefully guard against anything that might disrupt the society, praying: —

Never, by schism or by sin,
May we that union sever,
Till all, to perfect stature grown,
Are one with Thee forever! (Hymn 461.)

Amen.

A. W. Meyer.

Address at the Graduation of Nurses.

LADIES OF THE GRADUATING CLASS: —

The exercises of this evening mean to you an end and — a beginning. To-night you close the time of preparation; you close years of toil and hope. To-night you are told that the time of schooling and testing by your faculty is over, and in token of your success in finishing the work and the studies of the course upon which you had entered you are to be given the diploma acclaiming you to the world to be trained nurses, worthy of the confidence generally reposed in such persons, entitled to the respect due this profession, and able to render intelligent and skilful service in this calling. Official schooling closes for you to-night, and in your hand you will hold the testimony of an acknowledged medical faculty that you have absolved your course successfully.

But to-night means also a beginning for you. You are to go forth now to practise what you have been taught, perhaps to teach others. At this important turning-point in your career I am to address to you a few words, as I take it, of direction and heartening.

1.

Let me call to your mind therefore first of all that you have entered upon a very honorable calling. You yourself have no doubt considered the work of nursing the sick worthy of your time and efforts. But it is well enough to be reminded of it again and to know that all right-thinking people consider your calling an honorable and worthy profession.

Most of the sick whom you nurse will be very dear to some one. The life that you are gradually to nurse back to strength, if God wills, is very precious. The worth of the soul of the one whom you are to guard against temporal woe and death cannot be estimated. I do not wish to make odious comparisons. We know that a Christian serving in any capacity, even though it be in the most humble capacity, if it is a true service to man's temporal or eternal good, is in an honorable calling; and still there are services which require small gifts, little judgment, and which men therefore entrust to almost anybody, trained or untrained, of good or indifferent character. It is not so with the work of a trained nurse. Those parents whose very heart-strings cling to a dear child will not entrust that child during sickness to any unskilful hands if better can be had. They want a woman whose very personality will impress them as made up of refinement, strength, kindness, and intelligence. They want one who has the testimony of the medical profession that she has passed through years of training, that she is to be entrusted with entire confidence with the health and life of a helpless, sick child. No home so elevated, no home so wealthy and proud, no family so distinguished for ancestry or present achievement but they will welcome you into their home and give you charge of that which is more precious to them than their own life, the life of a loved one. Certainly that is an honorable calling. Who would not feel honored and become conscious of the respect of his fellow-men when the best, the most cultured, and the most conscientious of their fellow-men entrust them with the care of a loved patient? 'Tis true, at other times you may be called to a humble home. You may visit the sick-chamber of a poor and neglected person; and yet, was Jesus less divine when He healed the leper than when He spoke to that Master of Israel Nicodemus? So also your calling is just as honorable whether you follow it in the homes of the very poorest or in the homes of those among men who have been raised to the highest pinnacles of earthly grandeur, glory, and fame.

Keep this in mind when the beggarly elements and the contemptible rubbish of sin and vice are thrown into your way to tempt you. You have a great work to do; you cannot afford to leave your honorable and high calling for the sake of any unworthy action or undertaking.

2.

In the second place, I would remind you of the fact that yours is a truly *womanly* calling. A great deal is said and written concerning the rights of women. Men have complained that women are entering upon their peculiar spheres. We are told that a woman's place is not out in the public world. I do not intend to discuss this question of woman's sphere in minute detail; but this much I believe we all would agree upon, that to nurse the sick is a truly womanly profession. Is there any difference of opinion among you upon this fact that the chamber of the sick and suffering demands the quiet step, the soft voice, the tender hand, the sympathetic heart, the quick and true intuition of a genuinely womanly woman? The poet recognized this when he said: —

> O woman, in our hours of ease
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
> And variable as the shade
> By the light-quivering aspen made;
> When pain and anguish wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou.

However much men may cavil at the increasing occupation of important positions by women, I have never yet heard a man declare that a woman should be excluded from the sick-room; I have never heard one insist that her place is not at the sick-bed. Physicians standing highest in their calling have declared that in many cases good nursing is more important than the care of the physician. This, then, should hearten and encourage you to-night — you are entering upon a profession worthy of the best efforts of a good woman and honorable in the service which it renders, a profession which, all the world concedes, belongs to woman.

3.

To what has been said I believe a word of caution should be added. It is true that at times nursing presents difficult problems. It is no easy task which you have undertaken. It is not a sinecure that you have chosen. Every new case which you undertake will present its own peculiar problems. There will not only be the two problems, one of the disease and the other of the patient; these two, in themselves often severely intertwined, will be still further complicated by your position under a physician and by your relation to the members of the family. 'Tis true, you will not bear the chief responsibility, — that rests upon the practising surgeon or physician, — but nevertheless your very training and experience have given you an insight into pathological conditions and clinical therapeutics. You have your own judgment; you have your own conscience. There may come a time when you are to decide whether you are to obey God rather than men, and that is for all of us a time which tests men's and women's souls. In the face of this and other difficulties you cannot, you dare not, deny yourself the directing and sustaining power which God has given to men in His Word and in the Sacraments. Every one connected with the medical profession, whether he is surgeon or physician, general practitioner or specialist or trained nurse, should take an abundance of time to meditate upon what his Lord has said: "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live," Deut. 8, 3. And if man does not live by bread alone, much less does he live alone by what is called medicine. Physicians and nurses need to remember this truth.

4.

Another phase of your profession seems to demand a few words. The profession of a trained nurse exposes her to peculiar temptations. No doubt some would exaggerate the danger. But it is just as dangerous, if not more so, to underestimate the danger. *There is danger,* there will be temptations, temptations of such a nature as others in other professions do not know. But be sure of this, other professions have temptations of which you know nothing. Every walk of life has its peculiar dangers. Do not allow the thought at any time to weaken your moral purpose. A Christian nurse has God's promise that with the temptation God will grant a way to escape that she may be able to bear it. Those, of course, who go forth believing that they can stand in their own strength, that their profession of nursing the sick gives them a good excuse for neglecting the ordinary means of grace, the care for the soul, the attendance upon the ministrations of God's Word and Sacraments, the reading of the Bible and private prayer, will succumb when they are suddenly overwhelmed with a powerful temptation. When they give way and fall, they will find that the bread which they have eaten and the medicine which they have taken has not strengthened the soul against the soul's peculiar dangers. Such have but themselves to blame if temptation proves too strong for them. To-night, therefore, just as solemnly as I can say it, I would tell you that a trained nurse needs to look well to the welfare and eternal salvation of her own soul. She needs the Bible. She needs the forgiveness of sins which it bestows, and she needs the power unto godliness which it conveys. She needs to know how to pray, and she needs to practise what she knows. She needs the association of true Christian women. She needs a pastor. Above all things, she needs the continued attendance and care of the Good Shepherd. To-night you ought to look up to the Good Shepherd and pray: —

I need Thee every hour;
Stay Thou near by.
Temptations lose their power
When Thou art nigh.

Remain a faithful member of the flock of the Lord Jesus, keep close to Him, and He will absolutely fulfil His promise to you that you will not be tempted above that you are able. The soldier must face the cannon's mouth belching fire and death. Then it is that the Christian soldier calls to mind the Word of God, repeats a hymn, and utters a prayer. Just in that same manner you in your time of trial should fight the good fight of faith and stand against the wiles of the devil.

In conclusion I cannot refrain from referring to the times * in which you are to go forth to practise your profession. When was there a time when a nurse was so much needed as to-day? So great is the demand, so many are the sick-beds, so numerous are the wounded and the dying, that trained nurses will not suffice. The wounded and dying are waiting for you, they are calling for your services. Go forth, then, to cheer the dark moments of the sufferer, to lift the cooling draught to the lips of the famishing, to cleanse and to bind up the wounds that pain and cut and tear, to tend to in one way or the other the aching, the burning, the twitching muscles and limbs. Go forth to listen to the message of the dying, to promise him that his mother, his loved ones, shall be made acquainted with his last words, to speak, if need be, some word of comfort, to assist in devotion or prayer some distressed soul; and God bless you in your ministrations and permit you to serve men for their temporal and eternal welfare and to glorify God in a calling so honorable, so womanly, so much needed, and so worthy, so blessed in its services!

S.

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* This address was delivered in 1917.

Mother's Day.

Prov. 14, 1.

There are few words more familiar and more sacred, echoing and reechoing with the most pleasing sentiments and the most precious memories of the human heart, than the word *home*. Home is the garden of the Lord, which His own hand has planted and which His providence has wonderfully maintained. Says the poet: —

> **The pilgrim's staff in vain seeks Eden's lovely ground,**
> **But in home's happy joys again an Eden may be found.**

No more beautiful picture on earth than a well-regulated and happy home. But not every home answers to this description. Sin and the manifold evils that have by reason of sin found root in human nature, have made much sad havoc with domestic felicity; and much, very much indeed, depends upon the members that make up the home. And upon no one does it depend more than upon her who is the soul of the home, her to whom it is given as a mother, wife, sister, and daughter to build up, as our text says, the home; to make it strong and beautiful and thus fulfil the purpose of God in setting the human race in families. Yes, without woman's acting her part aright to create its hallowed atmosphere and to build up the sacred structure there can be no home. Since, then, the blessedness of human life depends so largely upon the home, and the prosperity of the home has been entrusted for the most part unto woman, let us, invited by the social appointment of this day, regard —

How Woman in the Various Relations She Sustains Can Meet Her Sacred Trust.

1.

Woman is a *daughter* — in her parents' heart and home. What responsibility and claim rests upon her in that relationship? We answer, a twofold one: affection and obedience. It seems difficult to conceive of a daughter devoid of affection. But alas! cases have been too frequently observed in which a child who has been most tenderly cherished has developed into a most unloving and unlovable creature. The instance of the great English poet Milton, who was blind, comes to mind — how his two elder daughters so shamefully disregarded his wishes, ran him into unnecessary expenses, sold his valuable books, often parting with them to purchase jewelry and attractive wares presented by some hucksters. While less glaring, we have known cases in which daughters have been so callously absorbed in thoughts of themselves that all sympathy for an aging mother has been wanting; cases where the youthful upstart has deemed it beneath herself to help a hard-toiling parent, yes, exacted excessive attention, disregarded paternal advice, and treated father and mother with open contempt.

Such things ought not to be and inevitably bring their own punishment. "Honor thy father and thy mother," reads the commandment of God; honor them not because they are well educated and intelligent, not because they move in upper society, are rich and in a position to indulge you in all manner of luxuries, elevating you in position and possessions; honor that man whom you call father and her whom you call your mother because he is *your* father and she is *your* mother. The Apostle Paul, referring to the youthful members of the domestic circle, writes: "Let them learn first to show piety at home and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God." The first and most important sphere for the exhibition of piety is the home. What a beautiful example in sacred history we have of that in the conduct of Ruth toward her mother-in-law. And in secular history we recall the action of Margaret, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, who, when he was committed to the Tower of London, pressed through the guards, threw her arms around her father's neck, and kissed him with utmost fervor and who, when her father's head was set upon London Bridge, bought it and was imprisoned for that last act of daughterly affection. We rejoice to know that there are daughters still with the same true and deep affection, ministering angels of the house, the very sunshine and music of the home. Their loving service may be scarcely known beyond the domestic hearth; but let them know that their deeds and words of sympathy, their filial obedience, are not overlooked by the recording angel on high. They are those who, as the text declares, with wisdom are building up the home.

2.

Again, woman is a *sister*. In that relationship her character and conduct are worthy beyond computation. Many a young man has declared that but for his sister's gentle control his life would have been ruined in the bud. Many a man to-day is harsh and headstrong very largely because he never enjoyed the tender companionship of a sister, when his character was forming. Let us bear in mind that home is a wonderful school. Powerfully, though imperceptibly, like leaven, the example and speech of brothers and sisters serve to mold the character and the career of the other members of the same domestic circle. Nothing is a more beautiful sight on earth than that of brothers and sisters in one household dwelling together in love and unity. Nothing is more distressing than to visit a family where domestic tempests prevail, where sister is jealous of sister, where the one sex is boisterous against the other, sisters upbraiding the brothers and brothers angrily retaliating in language and actions, causing the dwelling to be a veritable inferno, from which, we do not wonder, all are glad to escape. Let it not be so. Towards sisters and brothers, whether they be your seniors or your juniors, cherish true affection.

Remember who has placed you together and that, as the text states, it devolves upon you to build the home. What a fine illustration of the beauty and blessedness of true affection between sister and brother is presented in the village home of Bethany! Not as if they were uniform characters; quite the opposite. Who recalls not at an instance Martha's quarrelsome remark: "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me." Such scenes will occur. But with all their diversities of thought and feeling, they were one in heart, in aim, in hope, in Christ. And so we read, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." And where that divine love is, the human, domestic love will not fail to be and express itself.

3.

From woman's mission as a sister we now turn to her relationship as a *wife*. The very word awakens the most hallowed association and the most solemn issues. I have often marveled at the wisdom and goodness of God which has made it possible for two human beings to be of so much value to one another, to live so exclusively for one another, as a devoted husband and wife. The joys of life multiplied, the cares and sorrows mutually divided and shared; the one supplying what the other lacks, making each one's interest the same; cheering life's partner when depressed, assisting him when overwhelmed with work, attentive to his every want; watching with untiring care for weeks and months at his bedside in time of sickness and even after death, when the soul has been called away and the beloved form lies beneath the turf, carrying out in pious fidelity the cherished plans of their united life. Wonderful association! No wonder that God pronounced upon such a relation His "very good." Luther had such a wife. When he married, the Romish Church of course believed that the vengeance of God would attend the union. But it was the reverse. The chateau at Wittenberg was the scene of true happiness and fond affection. Luther's wife was his friend and helper. With all her heart she entered into his plans and interests. She read and prized his books. She helped him in his herculean labors. Very largely through her animating influence was he enabled to continue to be the liberator of thought, the restorer of the Church, the man whose voice of thunder rocked all Europe. Lincoln had such a wife. When the convention of nomination for the presidency sat at Chicago, with the name of Abraham Lincoln as candidate, he anxiously waited at the telegraph office in Springfield with his good friends. The name of Lincoln was flashed along the wires. His friends at once loudly congratulated him. But taking his hat, Lincoln left, saying with a smile: "There's a little woman over there who would like to hear this news," a remark which at once indicated the sympathetic interest of the wife in all her husband's career. Not all, indeed, have been so blessed, for instance, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. When he married, his wife fully consented to the continuation of his usual itinerant ministry, she would not interfere with any of his preaching arrangements. But, alas! lacking deep affection and true confidence, she became a sad hindrance. Wesley had to endure it for twenty-one years. Then she left him, and the poor man, depressed and bitter, wrote in his diary these brief, but suggestive words in Latin: "I did not leave her; I did not send her away; and I shall not send for her to come back." So, then, dear life companion, build wisely. Take an interest in all that concerns your husband. Let him see that his successes afford you sincere pleasure and that his disappointments and losses give you pain. Study his likes and dislikes, so that his little preferences are not forgotten and that a preference, having been once expressed, is regularly attended to. Never make unnecessary complaints or unkind criticisms. Never provoke or prolong any altercation. Never let the discovery of imperfections obscure the remembrance of his excellences. Try to think of him as you did when you first loved him. And when you are made conscious of his faults, — for who on earth can claim exemption from them? — try to remember that you, too, have your own. To which I would add one counsel more, and the most important. Be governed as a wife by true religion. Pray the Lord's Prayer, especially the Fifth Petition. Let the sound, safe principles of godliness guide you. Let the love of Christ constrain you in all your household engagements. Do what you are called to do heartily, as unto the Lord. Ever bear in mind that it is He who, in His providence, has led you together and that upon His blessing everything in your home is resting and that to Him you are responsible. The woman who fills such a mission cannot live in vain, and he who findeth such a wife "findeth," the holy writer says, "a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord," while the world and the community is better, for she spreads her blessings abroad.

4.

There remains one more relation, that of *mother*. Whose noblest impulses are not stirred, whose holiest memories are not quickened at the mention of the endearing name in which woman's office attains the climax? What excellence, beauty, love, patience, self-denial, and power is gathered and expressed in this one word — mother! What a mission is that of a mother! Where will you find any match for it? It spreads out before you the brightest, the fullest page of human history. Sings the poet: —

'Tis woman's to fashion the infant mind,
To kindle its thoughts and its hopes unbind,
To guide its young soul in the earliest flight
And lure it to worlds of unsullied light.

Ask the great men who have swayed earth's destiny, — and where is there a single great man that has not had a noble mother? — ask them what they think. Says the greatest of Church Fathers in a thousand years, St. Augustine, in his *Confessions:* "It is to my mother that I owe all." So Chrysostom; so Luther, who speaks of his mother in the most glowing terms, as a God-fearing woman, full of faith and prayer; so George Washington. "I would," says an American statesman, "have turned my back on God and become an atheist were it not for one thing, and that one thing was the remembrance of those sacred moments when my now departed mother, taking me by the hand, knelt with me at the throne of grace and taught me to say: Our Father who art in heaven." What a mission and what a responsibility all this places upon motherhood! That is a false and fatal ambition, on the part of any woman, which looks for a nobler field. This is worthy of the highest aspiration and the greatest energy. And, be it noted, without true and genuine love in the heart of Him whom Mary mothered, without deep religious conviction, godly character, noble example, prayer, and churchliness, how can any mother lead her offspring where and as she ought? Mothers, would you have your child, your children, grow up to call you blessed, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and in order to do that, yourselves cultivate spirituality and lead godly lives. Then are you building your house wisely.

If in the kind providence of God it has been your choice lot to have had, still to have, crowned with years, such a mother, fail not in accord with the social call of this day to send her in gratitude a token of your well-merited affection, to lighten and to brighten her declining years with every evidence of filial devotion. And if gone to her eternal reward, fail not to remember the spot where her hallowed dust slumbers against the day of resurrection and, by following the faith in which she fell asleep, to prepare for a gladsome reunion, so that she may rejoicingly say, as the consummation of her highest happiness: "Here, Lord, am I and the child, the children, whom Thou hast given me."

L. BUCHHEIMER, SR.

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